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MONTHLY PRELIMS — 120 MCQS

March 2026 — Monthly Prelims Practice

31 March 2026

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MONTHLY PRELIMS PRACTICE

March 2026

Question Bank with Full Solutions & Explanations

120
QUESTIONS

11
SUBJECTS

~35%
STATEMENT-BASED

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March 2026 · Monthly Prelims Practice · 120 Questions

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HOW TO USE THIS PDF

- 1 Attempt first.** Cover the answer section and try each question before revealing — simulates exam conditions.
- 2 Statement questions** (marked Statement-Based) test logical elimination — read all statements before choosing.
- 3 Concept notes** (✦) after each explanation give the broader UPSC context — read them even for correct answers.
- 4 Revise by subject.** Use the table above to focus on weak areas before the exam.
- 5 Online version** has Quiz Mode + instant scoring at ujyari.com/monthly/

All questions are based on March 2026 current affairs — grounded in editorials from The Hindu, Indian Express, Hindustan Times, Mint, Business Standard, Economic Times and Down to Earth.

March 2026 — Monthly Prelims Practice

March 2026

120 Questions

35–40% Statement-Based

Polity & Governance

Q1

The Finance Commission of India is constituted under which Article of the Constitution?

A Article 275

B Article 280

C Article 282

D Article 360

✓ B Article 280

Article 280(1) of the Constitution mandates the President to constitute a Finance Commission within two years of commencement of the Constitution and thereafter at the expiration of every fifth year, or at such earlier time as the President considers necessary. It recommends distribution of net tax revenues between the Union and states. Article 275 relates to grants-in-aid to states; Article 282 covers discretionary grants; Article 360 deals with Financial Emergency.

✦ The 16th Finance Commission (chaired by Arvind Panagariya, former NITI Aayog Vice Chairman) covers 2026-31 and tabled its report on February 1, 2026. The 15th FC (NK Singh) recommended 41% vertical devolution; the 14th FC (Y.V. Reddy) gave 42%. Constitutional bodies constituted by presidential order cannot be dissolved by executive order — distinguishing them from bodies like NITI Aayog.

[Read Source →](#)

Q2
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding the 16th Finance Commission:

1. It introduced GDP contribution (10%) as a new criterion in the horizontal distribution formula.
2. Income Distance carries the highest weight (45%) in the horizontal formula.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ A 1 only

Only Statement 1 is correct. The 16th Finance Commission introduced 'Contribution to GDP' as a new criterion at 10% weight, replacing the 15th FC's Tax Effort criterion. Statement 2 is incorrect — Income Distance carries 42.5% weight in the 16th FC formula, reduced from 45% under the 15th FC. Population (2011 Census) was increased to 17.5% from 15%.

✦ The full 16th FC horizontal formula: Income Distance (42.5%), Population-2011 (17.5%), Demographic Performance (10%), Forest and Ecology (10%), Area (10%), GDP Contribution (10%). Southern states argue that Income Distance — which rewards lower per-capita GSDP states — penalises those with better fiscal discipline and higher development. The 16th FC retained vertical devolution at 41% of divisible pool.

[Read Source →](#)

Q3

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Constitution 106th Amendment Act, 2023) provides reservation for women in which legislative bodies?

- A** Rajya Sabha and State Legislative Councils only
- B** Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies
- C** All three tiers of panchayats and urban local bodies
- D** Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, and all State Assemblies

✓ B Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies

The 106th Amendment provides one-third (33%) reservation for women in Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and the Delhi Legislative Assembly. It explicitly does not cover Rajya Sabha or State Legislative Councils. The reservation also applies to seats reserved for SCs and STs within these bodies. Implementation is contingent on completion of a census and subsequent delimitation.

✦ One-third reservation in panchayats (Article 243D) and urban local bodies (Article 243T) was already mandated by the 73rd and 74th Amendments (1992-93). The 106th Amendment was passed in a special session of Parliament in September 2023 with near-unanimous support — 454-2 in Lok Sabha and 214-0 in Rajya Sabha. The reservation is valid for 15 years from implementation, extendable by Parliament. India's current women representation in Lok Sabha stands at approximately 14-15%.

[Read Source →](#)

Q4

NITI Aayog was established on January 1, 2015. What is its statutory/constitutional basis?

- A** Article 263 of the Constitution
- B** The NITI Aayog Act, 2014
- C** An executive order with no statutory or constitutional basis
- D** The Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, amended 2015

✓ C An executive order with no statutory or constitutional basis

NITI Aayog has no statutory or constitutional basis. It was established by a Cabinet Secretariat Resolution (executive order) dated January 1, 2015, replacing the Planning Commission, which was also set up by an executive order in 1950. Because it is a non-statutory body, it can be dissolved or restructured by executive decision alone, unlike constitutional bodies such as the Finance Commission (Article 280) or the Election Commission (Article 324).

✦ No Act called 'NITI Aayog Act' exists. Article 263 deals with the Inter-State Council, not NITI Aayog. The Planning Commission similarly had no constitutional or statutory basis. NITI Aayog differs fundamentally from the Planning Commission in that it does not allocate funds to states and does not prepare five-year plans — it functions as a policy think tank and coordinates cooperative federalism through platforms like the Governing Council.

[Read Source →](#)

Q5
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding the Essential Commodities Act, 1955:

1. The 2020 amendment removed cereals, pulses, oilseeds, and edible oils from the list under normal circumstances.
2. Stock limits and price controls can be re-imposed only during war, famine, extraordinary price rise, or natural calamity.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 deregulated cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onions, and potatoes from routine stock-limit controls. Re-imposition of controls is permitted only under extraordinary circumstances — war, famine, natural calamity, or an extraordinary price rise. The price rise threshold is defined as a 100% retail price increase for horticultural/perishable produce or a 50% increase for non-perishable agricultural food items over the preceding 12 months.

✦ The 2020 ECA amendment was one of three controversial farm reform laws passed in September 2020 (the others being the Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce Act and the Farmers Agreement on Price Assurance Act). All three were repealed by the government in November 2021 following prolonged farmer protests. The ECA remains relevant for hoarding/black-marketing prosecution, MSP enforcement mechanisms, and the ongoing debate on balancing market liberalisation with consumer protection.

[Read Source →](#)

Q6

The Collegium system for judicial appointments in India evolved through which landmark cases?

- A** Kesavananda Bharati, Minerva Mills, and Waman Rao Cases
- B** ADM Jabalpur, Maneka Gandhi, and Bachan Singh Cases
- C** First, Second, and Third Judges Cases (1981, 1993, 1998)
- D** Vishaka, S.R. Bommai, and Indra Sawhney Cases

✓ C **First, Second, and Third Judges Cases (1981, 1993, 1998)**

The Collegium system evolved through three Supreme Court cases: *S.P. Gupta v. Union of India* (1981, First Judges Case), which held that presidential consultation with the CJI was not binding; *Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India* (1993, Second Judges Case), which reversed this and established the Collegium, giving primacy to the CJI; and the *Special Presidential Reference* (1998, Third Judges Case), which expanded the Collegium from the CJI plus 2 senior judges to the CJI plus the 4 senior-most Supreme Court judges.

✦ A fourth landmark — *Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India* (2015) — struck down the 99th Constitutional Amendment and the NJAC Act, which had attempted to replace the Collegium with a six-member National Judicial Appointments Commission including the Law Minister and two eminent persons. The Court held the NJAC violated the basic structure doctrine by compromising judicial independence. The Collegium currently comprises the CJI and the 4 senior-most SC judges for Supreme Court appointments, and the CJI plus 2 senior-most SC judges for High Court appointments.

[Read Source →](#)

Q7
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016:

1. It expanded recognised disability categories from 7 to 21.
2. It provides for 5% reservation in higher education and 4% in government jobs.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. The RPwD Act 2016 expanded recognised disability categories from 7 (under the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995) to 21, adding conditions such as autism spectrum disorder, specific learning disabilities, blood disorders (thalassemia, haemophilia), Parkinson's disease, and dwarfism. Section 32 mandates 5% reservation in government and government-aided higher educational institutions; Section 34 mandates 4% reservation in central government jobs for persons with benchmark disabilities (40% or above severity).

✦ India ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2007, which made updating the 1995 Act necessary. The term 'Divyangjan' was popularised by PM Modi. The Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan), launched in December 2015, aims to make public infrastructure and digital platforms accessible. The Unique Disability ID (UDID) portal provides centralised, tamper-proof disability certificates linked to Aadhaar.

[Read Source →](#)

Q8

The Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC) derives its constitutional authority from which provision?

- A** Fifth Schedule, Article 244(1)
- B** Sixth Schedule, Article 244(2)
- C** Article 371(A)
- D** Article 275(1) read with the Ninth Schedule

✓ B Sixth Schedule, Article 244(2)

The GHADC is constituted under the Sixth Schedule read with Article 244(2) of the Constitution, which provides for the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram through elected Autonomous District Councils. Unlike the Fifth Schedule (Article 244(1)), which applies to scheduled tribal areas in most mainland states and creates only advisory Tribal Advisory Councils, the Sixth Schedule grants ADCs legislative, executive, and judicial powers over tribal subjects including land, forests, and customary law.

✦ Meghalaya has three Sixth Schedule ADCs: the Garo Hills ADC (headquarters Tura), the Khasi Hills ADC (Shillong), and the Jaintia Hills ADC (Jowai). ADCs can make laws on specified subjects subject to the Governor's assent. Article 371(A) is a special provision for Nagaland — not Meghalaya. Article 275(1) deals with grants-in-aid to states from the Consolidated Fund and has no role in ADC governance.

[Read Source →](#)

Q9
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding Article 115 of the Constitution:

1. It provides for Supplementary Demands for Grants when original grants prove insufficient.
2. Supplementary Demands follow the same parliamentary procedure as the Union Budget.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. Article 115 authorises the government to seek supplementary, additional, or excess grants when the original appropriation is insufficient, a new service arises, or expenditure has already exceeded the original grant. Article 115(3) explicitly states that Articles 112, 113, and 114 (governing the annual financial statement, budget procedure, and Appropriation Bill respectively) apply equally to supplementary demands — meaning the same parliamentary voting and appropriation procedure applies.

✦ Key constitutional financial articles: Art. 112 (Annual Financial Statement — the Union Budget), Art. 113 (budget procedure in Parliament), Art. 114 (Appropriation Bill), Art. 116 (Vote on Account for pre-budget spending), Art. 266 (Consolidated Fund of India), Art. 267 (Contingency Fund of India, operated by executive without prior parliamentary approval up to authorised limit). Excess grants under Art. 115 require prior approval of the Public Accounts Committee before being put to vote in Lok Sabha.

[Read Source →](#)

Q10

The Chhattisgarh Freedom of Religion Bill and similar state legislation engage which Articles of the Constitution?

- A Articles 14-18 (Right to Equality)
- B Articles 25-28 (Right to Freedom of Religion)
- C Articles 32 and 226 (Right to Constitutional Remedies)
- D Articles 19-22 (Right to Freedom)

✓ B Articles 25-28 (Right to Freedom of Religion)

Anti-conversion laws primarily engage Articles 25-28 (Right to Freedom of Religion). In *Rev. Stainislaus v. State of Madhya Pradesh* (1977), a five-judge Constitution Bench unanimously held that the right to 'propagate' religion under Article 25(1) means the right to transmit or spread one's religion by exposition of its tenets — it does not include the right to convert another person, as that would impinge on the freedom of conscience of others. The Court accordingly upheld the Madhya Pradesh and Odisha anti-conversion laws as constitutionally valid.

✦ States with anti-conversion laws include Odisha (1967, the oldest), Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh. The laws prohibit conversion by force, fraud, or allurement ('inducement'). The Court in *Stainislaus* also held such laws fell within state competence under Entry 1 (public order) of List II (State List). Critics argue these laws are misused to target religious minorities and restrict the right to change one's religion, which they contend is implied in Article 25's freedom of conscience.

Q11
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding India's Four Labour Codes:

1. They consolidate 44 central labour laws into 4 codes.
2. Labour being a Concurrent List subject, states must frame their own rules for the Codes to become operative.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ B 2 only

Only Statement 2 is correct. Statement 1 is factually incorrect — the four Labour Codes consolidate 29 central labour laws (not 44). Labour appears in the Concurrent List (List III, Entry 22), which means both Parliament and state legislatures can legislate on it; states must frame their own rules before a Code becomes operative within their territory. The Government of India brought all four Codes into force from November 21, 2025, but state-level implementation depends on each state notifying its rules.

✦ The four Labour Codes are: Code on Wages, 2019; Industrial Relations Code, 2020; Code on Social Security, 2020; and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020. Key reforms include: the Industrial Relations Code raises the threshold for prior government permission for retrenchment/layoffs from 100 to 300 workers; the Social Security Code formally recognises gig and platform workers for social security coverage for the first time; the Code on Wages extends minimum wage protection to all workers regardless of sector.

[Read Source →](#)

Q12

The Raisina Dialogue is jointly organised by which two bodies?

- A NITI Aayog and Ministry of External Affairs
- B Observer Research Foundation (ORF) and Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)
- C FICCI and Ministry of Commerce
- D ICRIER and Ministry of Finance

✓ B Observer Research Foundation (ORF) and Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)

The Raisina Dialogue is jointly organised by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). It was first held in March 2016 on the theme 'Asia: Regional and Global Connectivity,' with over 100 speakers from more than 35 countries. It is held annually in New Delhi and is India's premier multilateral conference on geopolitics, geoeconomics, and global governance.

✦ The dialogue is named after Raisina Hill in New Delhi — the elevated area where Rashtrapati Bhavan, North Block, and South Block are located, making it symbolic of India's seat of state power. ORF was founded in 1990. India's foreign policy positions articulated at Raisina consistently emphasise strategic autonomy, multi-alignment (engagement with multiple major powers simultaneously), and India's self-described role as 'Vishwamitra' — a friend to all nations. The Raisina Dialogue is often compared to the Munich Security Conference and the Davos World Economic Forum.

[Read Source →](#)

Q13

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023 amended how many central Acts and decriminalised how many provisions?

A 22 Acts; 100 provisions

B 35 Acts; 150 provisions

C 42 Acts; 183 provisions

D 58 Acts; 220 provisions

✓ C 42 Acts; 183 provisions

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023 (No. 18 of 2023) amended 42 central Acts and decriminalised 183 provisions across 19 Ministries/Departments, replacing imprisonment with monetary fines for minor technical or regulatory offences. The follow-up Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025 proposed to decriminalise a further 288 provisions across 16 Acts; it was introduced in Lok Sabha in May 2025 but was referred to a Select Committee and had not been passed as of March 2026.

✦ Jan Vishwas 2023 is part of India's broader trust-based governance reforms alongside GST (2017), the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (2016), and the Ease of Doing Business initiative. The Act draws on the principle that minor regulatory non-compliance should attract civil penalties, not criminal prosecution, freeing up court dockets and reducing compliance burden on MSMEs and individuals. Jan Vishwas 3.0 is reportedly in planning stages to decriminalise further offences.

[Read Source →](#)

Q14
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding India's National Waterways system:

1. India has 111 designated national waterways under the National Waterways Act, 2016.
2. National Waterway-2 (NW-2) is the Brahmaputra River.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. The National Waterways Act, 2016 (enacted April 12, 2016) designated 111 waterways as National Waterways, expanding from the earlier 5. NW-2 is the Brahmaputra River — specifically the Sadiya-Dhubri stretch (891 km) in Assam, originally declared NW-2 in 1988. NW-1 is the Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system (1,620 km).

✦ The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) was established in 1986 under the IWAI Act, 1985, and is headquartered in Noida. India has approximately 14,500 km of navigable waterways, of which around 5,200 km are usable by mechanised vessels. Inland water transport is 30-50% cheaper per tonne-km than road freight and significantly less carbon-intensive. As of 2025, only 29 of the 111 designated waterways are operational for cargo or passenger services.

[Read Source →](#)

Q15

INS Vikrant, India's first indigenous aircraft carrier, was commissioned in which year?

A '2019'

B '2020'

C '2022'

D '2024'

✓ C '2022'

INS Vikrant (IAC-1) was commissioned on September 2, 2022, at Kochi by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It was designed by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau and built by Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL) — the largest warship ever constructed in India. Its commissioning made India one of only six countries capable of indigenously designing and building an aircraft carrier.

✦ INS Vikrant displaces approximately 43,000 tonnes at full load, has a speed of 28 knots, and can carry up to 30 aircraft including MiG-29K fighters, Kamov-31 AEW helicopters, and Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH). It uses the STOBAR (Short Take-Off But Arrested Recovery) system and is 262.5 m long and 61.6 m wide. India also operates INS Vikramaditya (ex-Russian Admiral Gorshkov, commissioned November 2013). A second indigenous carrier (IAC-2) is in planning. INS Vikrant's commissioning is significant for India's blue-water navy ambitions in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

[Read Source →](#)

Economy & Development

Q16

CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement) differs from a plain FTA primarily because it additionally covers which areas?

- A** Only tariff reductions on manufactured goods
- B** Goods, services, investment, and intellectual property
- C** Only goods and agricultural products
- D** Only services and digital trade

✓ B Goods, services, investment, and intellectual property

A CEPA covers trade in goods, services, investment, and intellectual property — making it broader in scope than a plain Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which typically covers only goods tariffs. India signed a CEPA with the UAE (entered into force May 1, 2022) and a CECPA (Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement) with Mauritius (entered into force April 1, 2021, India's first trade agreement with an African country). India's 2022 agreement with Australia is called the ECTA (Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement), not a CEPA; a more comprehensive CECA with Australia remains under negotiation.

✦ India formally launched CEPA negotiations with Canada on March 2, 2026, in the presence of PM Modi and Canadian PM Mark Carney, targeting US\$50 billion in bilateral trade by 2030. A PTA (Preferential Trade Agreement) covers partial tariff concessions; an FTA eliminates most goods tariffs; a CEPA/CECA is the most comprehensive format, also covering services market access, investment protection, and IP enforcement. India is separately negotiating CEPAs with the EU and UK.

[Read Source →](#)

Q17
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding India's GDP base year revision (released February 2026):

1. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) conducts GDP estimation in India.
2. The new base year adopted is 2022-23, replacing the earlier 2011-12 base.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. MoSPI (through its National Statistical Office) conducts GDP estimation in India. On February 27, 2026, MoSPI released the new GDP series with 2022-23 as the base year, replacing the 2011-12 base. The revision adopted the double deflation method for the manufacturing sector — separately deflating output and input values — and aligned with the UN System of National Accounts (SNA) 2008 framework using Supply and Use Tables (SUT).

✦ India's GDP base year history: 1950-51, 1960-61, 1970-71, 1980-81, 1993-94, 1999-2000, 2004-05, 2011-12, and now 2022-23. Double deflation provides more accurate real value-added measurement, especially in manufacturing, by using 500-600 deflator items compared to roughly 180 previously. India plans to transition to SNA 2025 standards in a future revision. The revised base year also integrates more granular enterprise data from the Annual Survey of Industries and the Economic Census.

[Read Source →](#)

Q18

EASE 9.0 (PSB Reforms) is a joint initiative of which two bodies?

- A** SEBI and Ministry of Finance
- B** RBI and Finance Commission
- C** Indian Banks Association (IBA) and Ministry of Finance
- D** NITI Aayog and Banking Division, DOFS

✓ C Indian Banks Association (IBA) and Ministry of Finance

EASE (Enhanced Access and Service Excellence) is a joint initiative of the Indian Banks Association (IBA) and the Department of Financial Services (DFS) under the Ministry of Finance. EASE 9.0, launched in February 2026, is built around the RISE framework — Risk & Resilience, Innovation, Socio-economic Impact, and Excellence — and aims to transform Public Sector Banks (PSBs) into globally competitive institutions aligned with Viksit Bharat @2047.

✦ EASE reforms began in 2018 with EASE 1.0 following the PSB consolidation exercise (which reduced PSBs from 27 to 12). IBA (Indian Banks' Association) was founded in 1946 and represents scheduled commercial banks, regional rural banks, and cooperative banks. Each successive EASE edition raises the benchmark — EASE 9.0 emphasises AI/GenAI integration, climate risk frameworks, and financial inclusion for gig and platform workers. The Steering Committee of IBA governs implementation across all PSBs.

[Read Source →](#)

Q19

The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) is conducted by which agency, and which three core indicators does it measure?

- A NITI Aayog; GDP growth, inflation, and employment
- B National Statistical Office (NSO/MoSPI); Labour Force Participation Rate, Worker Population Ratio, and Unemployment Rate
- C Ministry of Labour; wage growth, job creation, and skill training
- D RBI; formal sector employment, urban unemployment, and gig economy metrics

✓ B

National Statistical Office (NSO/MoSPI); Labour Force Participation Rate, Worker Population Ratio, and Unemployment Rate

PLFS is conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) under MoSPI. It was launched in April 2017 to replace the NSSO Employment-Unemployment Surveys. Its three core indicators are: Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR — share of working-age population in the labour force), Worker Population Ratio (WPR — share of employed persons in the population), and Unemployment Rate (UR — share of unemployed among those in the labour force).

✦ From January 2025, PLFS was redesigned to provide monthly all-India estimates (rural + urban) under the Current Weekly Status (CWS) framework, replacing the earlier annual rural and quarterly urban release cycle. India's female LFPR has been rising but remains around 30-40%, among the lower levels in Asia. Urban female LFPR is lower than rural, partly due to the social norms and the withdrawal effect as household income rises (the U-shaped curve of women's labour force participation).

[Read Source →](#)

Q20
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding India's National Green Hydrogen Mission:

1. It was launched in January 2023 with a total outlay of Rs 19,744 crore.
2. It targets 5 million metric tonnes of green hydrogen production annually by 2030.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. The Union Cabinet approved the National Green Hydrogen Mission on January 4, 2023, with an initial outlay of Rs 19,744 crore (including Rs 17,490 crore for the SIGHT programme, Rs 1,466 crore for pilot projects, Rs 400 crore for R&D, and Rs 388 crore for other components). The Mission targets at least 5 million metric tonnes (MMT) of green hydrogen production per annum by 2030, with an associated addition of approximately 125 GW of renewable energy capacity.

✦ Green hydrogen is produced through electrolysis of water using renewable electricity — producing 1 kg requires approximately 55 kWh of electricity and 9 litres of water, emitting zero CO₂. The Mission is expected to create 600,000 jobs, avert nearly 50 MMT of CO₂ emissions annually, and attract over Rs 8 lakh crore in investment by 2030. Key demand sectors: steel, fertilisers, petroleum refining, and shipping. India aims to become a green hydrogen exporter, particularly to Europe and Japan.

[Read Source →](#)

Q21

Press Note 3 of 2020, issued by DPIIT, requires prior government approval for FDI from which category of countries?

- A All countries designated as tax havens by OECD
- B Countries sharing a land border with India
- C All FATF-blacklisted countries
- D Countries without bilateral investment treaties with India

✓ B Countries sharing a land border with India

Press Note 3 (2020 Series), issued by DPIIT on April 17, 2020, amended the FDI Policy to require prior government approval for investments from entities incorporated in countries sharing a land border with India — namely China (including Hong Kong), Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar. It also covers investments where the beneficial owner is a citizen of or situated in any such country. The measure was introduced to curb opportunistic takeovers of Indian companies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

✦ DPIIT (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade) was renamed from DIPP in 2019 and sits under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Out of 526 proposals received under PN3 since 2020, 124 were approved and 201 rejected as of early 2026. In March 2026, DPIIT amended PN3 to allow investors from land-border countries to hold up to 10% non-controlling stakes under the automatic route in select sectors, to boost domestic manufacturing and supply chain investment.

[Read Source →](#)

Q22

The India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) is administered by which ministry under the Semicon India Programme?

- A** Ministry of Heavy Industries
- B** Ministry of Science and Technology
- C** Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)
- D** Ministry of Commerce and Industry

✓ C Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)

ISM is administered by MeitY under the Semicon India Programme, which was approved by the Union Cabinet in December 2021 with a financial outlay of Rs 76,000 crore. ISM operates as an Independent Business Division within the Digital India Corporation and catalyses India's semiconductor manufacturing, packaging, and design ecosystem. Key approved projects include the Tata Electronics silicon fab at Dholera SIR (Gujarat) and the CG Power OSAT facility at Sanand (Gujarat).

✦ Micron Technology's ATMP (Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging) facility at Sanand (Rs 22,516 crore total investment, 50% central government incentive) packages and tests already-fabricated chips. Dholera Special Investment Region (SIR) is India's first greenfield smart city designated as a semiconductor manufacturing zone. As of December 2025, 10 semiconductor projects with a total investment of Rs 1.60 lakh crore have been approved across 6 states. India Semiconductor Mission 2.0 was announced in Union Budget 2026-27 with an initial provision of Rs 1,000 crore for FY 2026-27.

[Read Source →](#)

Q23
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding India's DISCOMs (Distribution Companies):

1. DISCOM financial stress arises partly from below-cost tariffs for farmers and domestic consumers.
2. RDSS (Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme, 2021) is a central scheme to reform DISCOMs.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. DISCOM financial stress stems from below-cost tariffs (especially for agriculture and domestic consumers), high AT&C (Aggregate Technical and Commercial) losses, and delayed subsidy payments from state governments. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) on June 30, 2021, with an outlay of Rs 3,03,758 crore over five years (FY 2021-22 to 2025-26), targeting a reduction of AT&C losses to 12-15% pan-India by 2024-25.

✦ DISCOMs purchase electricity from generators under Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) and distribute to end consumers. Their accumulated losses exceed Rs 6 lakh crore, constraining India's renewable energy targets — financially stressed DISCOMs are reluctant to sign new PPAs. RDSS is a results-linked scheme: funds are released only if DISCOMs meet pre-qualifying criteria and score above 60 on the evaluation matrix. Earlier reform scheme UDAY (Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana, 2015) restructured DISCOM debt. AT&C losses declined from 22.32% in FY 2020-21 to 16.44% in FY 2021-22 under early RDSS impact.

[Read Source →](#)

Q24

India's UPI (Unified Payments Interface) is operated by which body?

- A** Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- B** National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)
- C** Ministry of Finance directly
- D** State Bank of India

✓ B National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)

UPI is developed and operated by NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India), a not-for-profit organisation incorporated in 2008 and established under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, promoted by the Reserve Bank of India and the Indian Banks' Association (IBA). UPI was launched in 2016, and by 2025 processed over 13 billion transactions per month, making it the world's largest real-time payment network by volume. NPCI also operates IMPS, RuPay, Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS), FASTag, NACH, and Aadhaar-enabled Payment System (AePS).

✦ India has been actively exporting UPI infrastructure globally: it is live in UAE, Singapore, France, UK, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and 10+ other countries. NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of NPCI, handles this international expansion. UPI's success as a Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) was a flagship advocacy theme at India's G20 Presidency in 2023. The RBI regulates payment systems under the PSS Act 2007 but does not itself operate UPI.

[Read Source →](#)

Q25

The BHAVYA scheme (Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana), approved by the Union Cabinet in March 2026, is implemented by which agency?

- A NITI Aayog
- B National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)
- C National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Ltd (NICDC)
- D Ministry of Heavy Industries

✓ C National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Ltd (NICDC)

BHAVYA (Rs 33,660 crore outlay; 100 plug-and-play industrial parks over six years from 2026-27) is implemented by NICDC (National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Ltd) under DPIIT (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade). NICDC was originally established in 2013 as DMICDC for the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor and renamed in 2022 to reflect its expanded national mandate. The scheme targets approximately 15 lakh direct jobs.

✦ NICDC's ownership structure is 51% Government of India and 49% JBIC (Japan Bank for International Cooperation). NICDC implements all of India's major industrial corridor projects: DMIC (Delhi-Mumbai), CBIC (Chennai-Bengaluru), AKIC (Amritsar-Kolkata), VCIC (Vizag-Chennai), HNIC (Hyderabad-Nagpur), and HWIC (Hyderabad-Warangal). Each BHAVYA industrial park spans 100-1,000 acres with plug-and-play infrastructure — internal roads, underground utilities, ready-built sheds, and testing labs.

[Read Source →](#)

Q26
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding the Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) used in highway projects:

1. Under HAM, the government pays 40% of project cost upfront and the remaining 60% as annuity over 15 years.
2. Traffic and revenue risk under HAM remains with the private developer.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ A 1 only

Statement 1 is correct: under HAM the government pays 40% of the project cost during construction and the remaining 60% as annuity payments over the operational concession period (typically 15 years). Statement 2 is incorrect: traffic and revenue risk under HAM remains with the GOVERNMENT, not the private developer — the concessionaire collects no toll and receives fixed annuity, insulating it from traffic uncertainty. This is the key structural difference from the BOT (Build-Operate-Transfer) model.

✦ HAM combines EPC (Engineering, Procurement and Construction) and BOT-Annuity features. Under EPC, the government bears 100% cost and risk; under BOT, the developer collects tolls and bears revenue risk. HAM balances risk: construction and O&M risk lies with the developer, traffic/revenue risk with the government. HAM is preferred in projects where toll viability is uncertain. NHAI introduced HAM in 2016 and now awards the majority of its highway projects under this model.

[Read Source →](#)

Q27

Japan has been India's largest bilateral development assistance (ODA) partner since which year, implemented through JICA?

A 1947

B 1958

C 1971

D 1991

✓ B 1958

Japan has been extending bilateral ODA (Official Development Assistance) to India since 1958, making India the first-ever recipient of a Japanese ODA loan. Japan is India's largest bilateral donor; India is simultaneously Japan's largest ODA recipient globally. Cumulative ODA from Japan to India exceeds JPY 6,978 billion (approximately Rs 4.4 lakh crore). JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) is the implementing agency.

✦ Major Japan-funded projects in India: Delhi Metro, Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC), Ahmedabad-Mumbai High Speed Rail (Bullet Train), Chennai Metro, and various water supply/sewage projects. Japan's ODA loans to India carry very low interest rates (0.1-0.3%). India and Japan also have a \$75 billion currency swap agreement and cooperate in the QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) along with the USA and Australia.

[Read Source →](#)

Q28

India's 500 GW renewable energy capacity target by 2030 is part of which commitment?

- A** India's commitment under the Kyoto Protocol (1997)
- B** India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement
- C** The National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) target from 2008
- D** The G20 leaders summit clean energy pledge from 2021



India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement

India's 500 GW non-fossil energy capacity target by 2030 is part of India's NDC (Nationally Determined Contribution) under the Paris Agreement. India announced this target at COP26 (Glasgow, 2021) and it is enshrined in India's Updated First NDC submitted to UNFCCC in August 2022. The updated NDC also targets 50% cumulative electric power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030 and a 45% reduction in GDP emissions intensity from 2005 levels. India crossed 505 GW total installed capacity in late 2025 with non-fossil sources exceeding 50%.

✦ India is the 3rd-largest greenhouse gas emitter globally but ranks 7th in per-capita emissions, reflecting its developmental status. India's long-term target is net-zero by 2070. India's climate negotiations position is anchored in CBDR (Common But Differentiated Responsibilities) and the right to development. The Kyoto Protocol (1997) did not set binding targets for India as a developing country; the Paris Agreement (2015) uses country-determined voluntary targets (NDCs) instead.

[Read Source →](#)

Environment & Ecology

Q29
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding the Ramsar Convention:

1. The Convention was signed in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran.
2. India has the highest number of Ramsar sites in Asia.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands was signed on February 2, 1971, in Ramsar, Iran (February 2 is now observed as World Wetlands Day). India has 98 Ramsar sites as of February 2026 — the highest in Asia (and in South Asia), covering approximately 13.6 lakh hectares. India ranks 3rd globally after the United Kingdom (176 sites) and Mexico (144 sites). India ratified the convention on February 1, 1982. Chilika Lake (Odisha) and Keoladeo Ghana NP (Rajasthan) were India's first two Ramsar sites, both designated in 1982. The most recent additions in January 2026 were Patna Bird Sanctuary (UP) and Chhari-Dhand (Gujarat).

✦ Ramsar defines wetlands broadly — marshes, fens, peatlands, rice paddies, coral reefs, mangroves, rivers, and constructed wetlands all qualify. India's Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, govern domestic wetland protection. Tamil Nadu has the highest number of Ramsar sites among Indian states (20), followed by Uttar Pradesh. Globally, the UK has the most Ramsar sites (176). Montreux Record (subset of Ramsar list) flags wetlands under threat; Indian sites previously on it include Keoladeo and Chilika (both since removed after recovery).

[Read Source →](#)

Q30

World Wildlife Day is observed on March 3, commemorating the signing of which convention in 1973?

- A** Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- B** Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
- C** CITES — Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
- D** Bonn Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

✓ C CITES — Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

World Wildlife Day (March 3) commemorates the signing of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) on March 3, 1973, in Washington D.C. The UN General Assembly proclaimed March 3 as World Wildlife Day in December 2013 (68th session). CITES entered into force in July 1975; India acceded in 1976 and currently has 184 parties globally.

✦ CITES regulates international wildlife trade through three appendices: Appendix I — commercial trade banned (most threatened species, e.g., Tiger, Asiatic Lion, Snow Leopard, GIB, Indian Elephant); Appendix II — trade permitted with monitoring and permits (e.g., Saltwater Crocodile); Appendix III — species protected in at least one country and requesting assistance. CITES does NOT ban all trade but ensures it is sustainable and legal. CBD (1992) deals with biodiversity conservation broadly; CMS (1979) covers migratory species; Ramsar (1971) covers wetlands — all are distinct conventions.

[Read Source →](#)

Q31

The National Chambal Sanctuary, the primary stronghold of the Gharial in India, is shared across which three states?

A Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan

B Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh

C Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand

D Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh

✓ B Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh

The National Chambal Sanctuary spans Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh along approximately 425 km of the Chambal River. It is India's largest riverine sanctuary, covering over 5,000 sq km. The Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*) is IUCN Critically Endangered; the National Chambal Sanctuary recorded 2,456 gharials in the 2024 census, showing significant recovery from a low of ~182 adults in 2006. Chambal now supports approximately 80% of the world's adult gharials and 90% of wild nests. The sanctuary also protects the Red-crowned Roofed Turtle (CR) and Gangetic River Dolphin (EN).

✦ The Chambal River originates in the Vindhya Range (Madhya Pradesh), flows through Rajasthan, and meets the Yamuna in UP near Etawah. Project Crocodile (1975) initiated Gharial captive breeding and restocking. The Chambal is one of India's few relatively unpolluted major rivers as it has little industrial activity along its banks. A National Tri-State Chambal Sanctuary Management and Coordination Committee was formed in 2010 for coordinated conservation across all three states. Gharial is distinct from Mugger and Saltwater Crocodile — it is a fish-eater with a narrow snout and distinctive nasal boss (ghara) in males.

[Read Source →](#)

Q32
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding Deepor Beel in Assam:

1. It is the only Ramsar-designated wetland in Assam.
2. It is adjacent to the Rani-Garbhanga Reserve Forest, which is an elephant corridor.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. Deepor Beel is a perennial freshwater lake in the Kamrup district southwest of Guwahati and is the only Ramsar site in Assam (designated 2002). It is also a Wildlife Sanctuary. Elephants from the adjoining Rani-Garbhanga Reserve Forest elephant corridors visit the beel seasonally for aquatic vegetation. A nearby railway line cuts across the elephant corridors, causing conflict and mortality.

✦ Deepor Beel is a critical stopover for migratory birds on the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) and has been designated an Important Bird Area (IBA) by BirdLife International. It hosts over 200 bird species. Key threats: urban encroachment from expanding Guwahati, solid waste dumping from an adjacent municipal landfill, and railway infrastructure fragmenting wildlife corridors. Other important Ramsar sites nearby: Loktak Lake (Manipur) — largest freshwater lake in northeast India and home to the Brow-antlered Deer (Sangai).

[Read Source →](#)

Q33

The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), also known as the Bonn Convention, was signed in which year and protects which types of species?

- A 1972; endangered species in their entire range
- B 1979; wild animals that migrate across national boundaries
- C 1992; migratory birds listed under the Ramsar Convention
- D 2000; species whose migratory routes cross international waters

✓ B 1979; wild animals that migrate across national boundaries

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), also known as the Bonn Convention, was signed in Bonn, West Germany, in 1979 and entered into force in November 1983. It protects all wild animals — birds, mammals, reptiles, fish, and insects — that migrate across national boundaries, regardless of whether their routes cross international waters. India is a signatory and hosted COP13 of CMS in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, in February 2020.

✦ CMS has two appendices: Appendix I lists endangered migratory species (strict protection, no take); Appendix II lists species with unfavourable conservation status requiring international agreements. Under CMS, India has signed MOUs for the Snow Leopard, Dugong, Sharks, and the Siberian Crane. India lies on the Central Asian Flyway (CAF), one of CMS's most significant flyway regions. The CAF covers 30 countries from Siberia to the Maldives. CMS is administered under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and is headquartered in Bonn, Germany.

[Read Source →](#)

Q34

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted at CBD COP15 (2022) includes which target that is often called the '30x30' target?

- A Reduce biodiversity loss by 30% from 2010 levels by 2030
- B Protect 30% of land and ocean by 2030
- C Mobilise \$30 billion for biodiversity conservation by 2030
- D Restore 30 million hectares of degraded ecosystems by 2030

✓ B Protect 30% of land and ocean by 2030

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), adopted at CBD COP15 in Montreal in December 2022, includes Target 3 — the '30x30' target: effective conservation and management of at least 30% of the world's lands, inland waters, coastal areas, and oceans by 2030. The GBF also includes a target to mobilise at least \$200 billion per year for biodiversity by 2030 (not \$30 billion). It is widely described as the 'Paris Agreement for biodiversity'.

✦ India is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 1992, Rio de Janeiro). India's Biodiversity Act, 2002, operationalises CBD through the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) and State Biodiversity Boards. India has four biodiversity hotspots: Western Ghats, Eastern Himalayas (Indo-Burma), and the Sundaland extension (Nicobar Islands). The GBF has 4 long-term goals (for 2050) and 23 targets (for 2030). Currently only 17% of terrestrial and 10% of marine areas are protected globally.

[Read Source →](#)

Q35
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding India's thermal power plant emission norms:

1. The 2015 environment norms set stricter limits on SO₂, NO_x, and particulate matter.
2. Flue-Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) systems specifically reduce SO₂ by converting it into gypsum.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. In December 2015, MoEFCC notified stricter emission standards for thermal power plants under the Environment (Protection) Amendment Rules — covering SO₂, NO_x, particulate matter (PM), and mercury for the first time. FGD (Flue-Gas Desulphurisation) systems use limestone slurry in a wet scrubber: limestone reacts chemically with SO₂ to produce calcium sulphite, which is oxidised to calcium sulphate (gypsum, CaSO₄). This gypsum is a commercial by-product used in cement and wallboard manufacturing, offsetting FGD installation costs.

✦ India's National Clean Air Programme (NCAP, 2019) targets 40% reduction in PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ in 131 non-attainment cities by 2026. For NO_x control, Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) or Selective Non-Catalytic Reduction (SNCR) systems are used. For PM, Electrostatic Precipitators (ESPs) are installed. FGD compliance has been repeatedly delayed — as of 2025 only a small fraction of coal plants are fully compliant. The Government of India has since 2025 began reviewing mandatory FGD requirements for plants retiring before 2030.

[Read Source →](#)

Q36

Manas National Park was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in which year and holds which additional conservation designations?

- A** 1973; Project Tiger Reserve only
- B** 1985; UNESCO WHS, Project Tiger Reserve (1973), Biosphere Reserve (1989), and Elephant Reserve (Chirang-Ripu, 2003)
- C** 1992; UNESCO WHS and Ramsar Wetland
- D** 2000; UNESCO WHS and National Park only

✓ B

1985; UNESCO WHS, Project Tiger Reserve (1973), Biosphere Reserve (1989), and Elephant Reserve (Chirang-Ripu, 2003)

Manas NP was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985. Its full list of designations: Project Tiger Reserve (1973 — one of the original 9 Tiger Reserves), UNESCO WHS (1985), UNESCO Biosphere Reserve (1989 under the Man and Biosphere Programme), and National Park (officially declared 1990). It was placed on the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger from 1992 to 2011 due to insurgency, poaching, and encroachment, and was successfully delisted after recovery efforts. Manas is also part of the Chirang-Ripu Elephant Reserve (Project Elephant, 2003).

✦ Manas NP (Baksa and Chirang districts, Assam) lies on the foothills of the Bhutan Himalaya and is contiguous with the Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan, forming a transboundary conservation area. Key flagship species: Golden Langur (IUCN Endangered — found only in Assam and Bhutan), Pygmy Hog (world's smallest wild pig, IUCN Critically Endangered), Hispid Hare (CR), and Indian One-Horned Rhinoceros. A successful Pygmy Hog reintroduction programme has been run by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) since 2008.

[Read Source →](#)

Q37

India lies on which major migratory bird flyway that connects Siberia and Central Asia to South and Southeast Asia?

- A Atlantic Americas Flyway
- B Central Asian Flyway
- C East African Western Palearctic Flyway
- D Pacific Americas Flyway

✓ B Central Asian Flyway

India lies on the Central Asian Flyway (CAF), which stretches from breeding grounds in Siberia and Central Asia to wintering grounds in South and Southeast Asia, covering 30 countries. Over 600 species of migratory birds use the CAF, with more than 240 species in decline. Key Indian wintering sites include Keoladeo Ghana NP (Bharatpur), Chilika Lake (Odisha), and Pulicat Lake (Andhra Pradesh).

✦ At CMS COP 14 (February 2024), India introduced the Initiative for the Central Asian Flyway, adopted to restore and maintain favourable conservation status for migratory species. The Siberian Crane (Critically Endangered) historically wintered at Keoladeo Ghana NP (UNESCO WHS since 1985) but has nearly disappeared due to habitat destruction along the flyway through Afghanistan and Iran. India is a signatory to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), also known as the Bonn Convention.

[Read Source →](#)

Q38
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding polymetallic nodules:

1. They are found on the deep-sea floor and contain manganese, nickel, cobalt, and copper.
2. India has Pioneer Investor status for nodule exploration in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB).

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. Polymetallic nodules found on the deep-sea floor contain manganese, nickel, cobalt, and copper. India became the first country in the world to receive Pioneer Investor status in 1987 and was allocated an exclusive area of approximately 1.5 lakh sq km in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) — not the Clarion-Clipperton Zone (CCZ), which is in the Pacific and allocated to other nations. India retained 75,000 sq km after surrendering 50% under its 2002 ISA contract.

✦ The International Seabed Authority (ISA), established under UNCLOS and headquartered in Kingston, Jamaica, regulates deep-sea mining in the international seabed area (the 'Area'). India ratified UNCLOS in 1995. Recent research on 'dark oxygen' suggests polymetallic nodules may generate oxygen electrochemically without sunlight, raising new environmental concerns about deep-sea mining. India's Deep Ocean Mission (Rs 4,077 crore, 2021) includes further nodule exploration using the submersible Matsya 6000.

[Read Source →](#)

Science & Technology

Q39

The CE20 cryogenic engine powers which ISRO launch vehicle, and uses which propellant combination?

- A** PSLV; uses solid propellant with liquid upper stage
- B** LVM3 (formerly GSLV Mk III); uses liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen
- C** SSLV; uses solid propellant throughout all stages
- D** GSLV Mk II; uses semi-cryogenic propellant (kerosene and LOX)

✓ B LVM3 (formerly GSLV Mk III); uses liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen

The CE20 cryogenic engine powers the C32 cryogenic upper stage of LVM3 (formerly GSLV Mk III). It burns liquid hydrogen (LH₂) as fuel and liquid oxygen (LOX) as oxidiser. CE20 was developed by ISRO's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) and is tested at the ISRO Propulsion Complex (IPRC), Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu. On 10 March 2026, ISRO successfully conducted a sea-level hot test at an uprated 22-tonne thrust level for 165 seconds.

✦ LVM3 is ISRO's heaviest operational rocket, capable of placing 4 tonnes into GTO and 10 tonnes into LEO. It is the vehicle for the Gaganyaan human spaceflight programme and was used commercially to launch OneWeb satellites. Cryogenic engine technology was denied to India by the US (under MTCR pressure) in the 1990s when Russia was about to transfer it — India's successful indigenous development of CE7.5 and CE20 represents a strategic technological milestone. CE20 uses a gas-generator cycle, unlike the CE7.5 which uses a staged combustion cycle.

[Read Source →](#)

Q40
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation):

1. The NavIC constellation was completed in April 2016 and uses 7 satellites (3 GEO and 4 GSO).
2. NavIC provides coverage over India and up to 1,500 km beyond India's borders.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. The NavIC constellation (7 satellites: 3 GEO at ~36,000 km altitude and 4 inclined GSO) was completed with the launch of IRNSS-1G on 28 April 2016, after which PM Modi renamed the system NavIC. NavIC provides position accuracy better than 20 metres and covers India plus a region extending ~1,500 km beyond its borders (longitude 30°–130°E, latitude 30°S–50°N). In 2026, NavIC reliability came under scrutiny after atomic clock failures in multiple satellites.

✦ NavIC (also called IRNSS) is India's answer to GPS (USA), GLONASS (Russia), Galileo (EU), and BeiDou (China). NVS-01 (launched 2023) is the first next-generation NavIC satellite incorporating an indigenous Indian atomic clock — a critical dependency that had previously been sourced from abroad. NavIC has two services: Standard Positioning Service (SPS, civilian) and Restricted Service (RS, encrypted, for authorised users including defence). ISRO's Space Applications Centre (SAC), Ahmedabad, manages NavIC applications.

[Read Source →](#)

Q41

The GenomeIndia Project created a national genomic dataset linked to which data repository?

- A ICMR National Biorepository
- B Indian Biological Data Centre (IBDC)
- C National Institute of Biomedical Genomics (NIBMG)
- D CSIR Gene Bank

✓ B Indian Biological Data Centre (IBDC)

The GenomeIndia Project, spearheaded by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), is linked to the Indian Biological Data Centre (IBDC) — India's first national repository for life science data, established at the Regional Centre for Biotechnology (RCB), Faridabad, Haryana. The IBDC portal was launched on 9 January 2025 at the Genome India Data Conclave, making 10,074 whole genome sequences (covering 85 populations including 32 tribal groups) accessible globally.

✦ IBDC is India's equivalent of NCBI GenBank (USA) and the European Nucleotide Archive (ENA). India's extraordinary genetic diversity — shaped by endogamy, tribal isolation, and thousands of years of population straturation — means Western genomic databases may not accurately predict drug responses or disease risks for Indians. The GenomeIndia dataset enables precision medicine tailored to Indian populations and supports drug development for conditions like sickle cell anaemia, which disproportionately affects India's tribal communities. DBT also oversees the Bioinformatics Infrastructure Facility (BIF) network.

[Read Source →](#)

Q42

The IndiaAI Mission, approved in 2024, carries which approximate outlay and primary purpose?

- A Rs 3,000 crore; build a national supercomputer network
- B Rs 10,372 crore; build an AI ecosystem covering compute, datasets, skills, applications, and safe AI
- C Rs 25,000 crore; develop a national AI company to compete globally
- D Rs 7,500 crore; subsidise AI chips for private companies


B

Rs 10,372 crore; build an AI ecosystem covering compute, datasets, skills, applications, and safe AI

The IndiaAI Mission was approved by the Union Cabinet on 7 March 2024 with a five-year outlay of Rs 10,372 crore (~USD 1.25 billion). It is structured around seven pillars: IndiaAI Compute Capacity (Rs 4,563 crore for 10,000+ GPUs), IndiaAI Innovation Centre, IndiaAI Datasets Platform, IndiaAI Application Development, IndiaAI FutureSkills, IndiaAI Startup Financing (Rs 1,942 crore), and Safe and Trusted AI. MeitY oversees implementation through the IndiaAI programme office.

✦ IndiaAI's public compute initiative (government-backed GPU cluster) addresses the core bottleneck that Indian AI startups face — access to affordable high-performance computing. The India Datasets Platform enables startups and researchers to access high-quality public sector datasets. India's AI strategy emphasises domestic language technologies (for 22 scheduled languages), public-interest AI in healthcare and agriculture, and reducing dependence on foreign AI infrastructure. AI governance in India is guided by NITI Aayog's Responsible AI framework and the proposed Digital India Act.

[Read Source →](#)

Q43
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding Concentrated Solar Thermal (CST) technology:

1. CST uses mirrors to concentrate sunlight and generate high-temperature heat above 150 degrees C.
2. Unlike solar PV, CST can directly decarbonise industrial processes requiring high-temperature heat.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. CST systems use mirrors (heliostats, parabolic troughs, or Fresnel reflectors) to concentrate sunlight onto a receiver, generating temperatures from 150°C to over 400°C. While solar PV converts light directly to electricity (which must then be converted to heat at inefficiency), CST generates heat directly — making it inherently suitable for decarbonising industrial processes in food processing, textile dyeing, chemical manufacturing, and dairy. About 57% of India's industrial heat demand is below 400°C, within CST's range.

✦ India's CST industrial heat potential is estimated at 6.45 GWth (MNRE-GEF-UNIDO Report). Rajasthan and Gujarat have the highest Direct Normal Irradiance (DNI), making them ideal for CST deployment. MNRE executed a CST scale-up programme (2017-2021) in partnership with GEF-UNIDO targeting manufacturing SMEs. Key CST distinction: CSP (Concentrated Solar Power) uses CST heat to generate electricity via a steam turbine; CST for process heat skips the power conversion step entirely, improving efficiency and cost.

[Read Source →](#)

Q44

IIT Guwahati researchers achieved an ultralow HER overpotential of 12 mV using which catalyst material for green hydrogen production?

- A Platinum-carbon (Pt/C) composite
- B MXene-Ruthenium catalyst
- C Nickel-iron hydroxide catalyst
- D Molybdenum disulfide (MoS₂) nanostructure

✓ B MXene-Ruthenium catalyst

Researchers at IIT Guwahati developed an MXene-Ruthenium catalyst (MXene = 2D transition metal carbide) that achieved an ultralow hydrogen evolution reaction (HER) overpotential of just 12 mV — outperforming the commercial Pt/C benchmark (20-50 mV). Ruthenium atoms were introduced into oxygen-deficient regions of ultra-thin ribbon-like MXene structures to increase active sites and charge transport. The study was published in *Advanced Functional Materials* by Prof P K Giri's group.

✦ Lower HER overpotential means less electrical energy wasted when splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen, directly reducing the cost of green hydrogen. The minimum thermodynamic voltage needed for water electrolysis is 1.23 V; any excess (overpotential) is wasted energy. MXenes were first discovered in 2011 at Drexel University, USA, and are now a major class of 2D materials for energy applications. The same IIT Guwahati material also functions as a Janus evaporator for solar desalination at 3.2 kg/m²/h — dual-purpose innovation relevant to India's water security challenge.

[Read Source →](#)

Q45

Green hydrogen colour codes: which of the following correctly matches a hydrogen type with its production method?

- A** Green H2 = steam methane reforming with carbon capture
- B** Blue H2 = renewable electrolysis of water
- C** Grey H2 = steam methane reforming without carbon capture
- D** Pink H2 = coal gasification

✓ C Grey H2 = steam methane reforming without carbon capture

Grey hydrogen (the most common form, >95% of global production) is produced by steam methane reforming (SMR) without carbon capture, releasing CO₂ directly into the atmosphere. Green H₂ = water electrolysis powered by renewable electricity (zero emissions); Blue H₂ = SMR WITH carbon capture and storage (CCS), reducing but not eliminating emissions; Pink H₂ = water electrolysis powered by nuclear energy; Turquoise H₂ = methane pyrolysis (solid carbon by-product); Black/Brown H₂ = coal gasification.

✦ India currently produces almost entirely grey hydrogen, used mainly for fertiliser (urea) production and petroleum refining. The National Green Hydrogen Mission (approved January 2023) targets production of 5 million metric tonnes (MMT) of green hydrogen per year by 2030, requiring ~125 GW of additional renewable energy capacity. India aims to become a global green hydrogen export hub, leveraging its solar irradiance advantage. SIGHT (Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition) is the financial incentive programme under the mission, administered by MNRE and MoPNG.

[Read Source →](#)

Q46
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding the Evo 2 genomic AI model:

1. It was developed through work involving the Arc Institute, Stanford-linked researchers, and NVIDIA.
2. Genomic AI tools raise biosecurity concerns because they could be misused to predict or design harmful biological agents.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. Evo 2 was developed by the Arc Institute (nonprofit biomedical research organisation) in collaboration with Stanford University researchers and NVIDIA, trained on ~9 trillion nucleotides from over 100,000 species. It is available on NVIDIA BioNeMo. While the developers excluded pathogen data and built in responsible-use guardrails, genomic foundation models broadly raise biosecurity concerns about potential misuse for designing harmful biological agents — a concern flagged by biosecurity experts globally.

✦ Evo 2 can predict the functional impact of gene mutations with ~90% accuracy (tested on BRCA1, the breast cancer gene) and was used to design a functional AI-designed bacteriophage — the first experimentally validated AI-designed organism. Biosecurity governance frameworks include the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC, opened 1972, entered force 1975) and WHO Global Health Security standards. India's biosecurity oversight involves DBT (Department of Biotechnology), RCGM (Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation), and GEAC (Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee). The IndiaAI Mission (Rs 10,372 crore) intersects with biotech AI policy under the Safe and Trusted AI pillar.

[Read Source →](#)

Q47

A quasar (quasi-stellar object) is powered by which astronomical phenomenon?

- A** Nuclear fusion in a massive star cluster
- B** Matter falling into a supermassive black hole, releasing enormous energy as an active galactic nucleus
- C** Collision between two neutron stars
- D** Rapid rotation of a pulsar generating electromagnetic radiation

✓ B

Matter falling into a supermassive black hole, releasing enormous energy as an active galactic nucleus

A quasar is an extremely luminous active galactic nucleus (AGN) powered by matter falling into a supermassive black hole (millions to tens of billions of solar masses). Gas in the accretion disk surrounding the black hole heats to millions of degrees and releases energy as electromagnetic radiation across the spectrum — light, X-rays, and radio waves. This conversion of gravitational potential energy to radiation is 6-32% efficient, far exceeding nuclear fusion (0.7%), making quasars the most energetically efficient objects known.

✦ Quasars are the most luminous persistent objects in the observable universe — the most powerful are thousands of times brighter than an entire galaxy like the Milky Way. They are visible at enormous cosmological distances (high redshift), making them useful for probing the early universe. Key distinctions for UPSC: Quasar = AGN point source (supermassive black hole accretion); Pulsar = rapidly rotating neutron star emitting periodic radio pulses; Magnetar = neutron star with extremely strong magnetic field; Blazar = AGN with relativistic jet pointed toward Earth. The accretion-powered quasar mechanism was first proposed by Edwin Salpeter and Yakov Zeldovich in 1964.

[Read Source →](#)

International Relations

Q48

The Chagos Archipelago dispute involves which island nation claiming sovereignty, and what is the strategic significance of Diego Garcia?

- A Seychelles; important for Indian Ocean fisheries management
- B Mauritius; major US-UK military base in the central Indian Ocean
- C Sri Lanka; strategic logistics hub for Indian Navy
- D Maldives; key monitoring station for submarine cable systems

✓ B Mauritius; major US-UK military base in the central Indian Ocean

Mauritius claims sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, arguing it was unlawfully excised by the UK in September 1965 (Lancaster House Agreement) before Mauritius gained independence in 1968. Diego Garcia, the largest island, hosts a major joint US-UK military base used for long-range bomber operations across the Indian Ocean. On 25 February 2019, the ICJ issued an advisory opinion that the UK's continued administration of Chagos was unlawful and should end. The UNGA adopted a resolution (116-6) in May 2019 supporting Mauritius.

✦ ICJ advisory opinions are non-binding but carry significant political and reputational weight in international law. The entire Chagossian population (approximately 1,500-2,000 people) was forcibly removed between 1967 and 1973 to make way for the military base — a fact the ICJ found relevant to its ruling on self-determination. The UK and Mauritius entered negotiations in 2022; a draft deal was announced in 2024 but remained under review. For India, the Chagos dispute intersects with its SAGAR doctrine and interest in Indian Ocean regional order. The archipelago also overlaps with the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), established in 1965.

[Read Source →](#)

Q49
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding India's vulnerability to West Asia conflicts:

1. India imports approximately 85-88% of its crude oil needs, with significant volumes from the Gulf.
2. Approximately 9 million Indians live in Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. India imports approximately 85-88% of its crude oil, making it highly vulnerable to Gulf supply disruptions. Around 9 million Indians reside in GCC countries and remit approximately \$40 billion annually — about 38% of India's total inward remittances in FY2023-24. India's fertiliser security is also affected as LNG from Qatar and UAE feeds urea production.

✦ India faces a "triple threat" from West Asia crises: higher energy costs, falling remittances, and reverse migration risk. Key evacuation operations in the region — Operation Rahat (2015, Yemen) evacuated 4,640 Indians and 960 foreigners; Operation Kaveri (2023, Sudan); Operation Ajay (2023, Israel-Gaza). India's total diaspora remittance receipts crossed \$120 billion in FY2023-24, the world's highest. Notably, advanced economies (USA, UK, Singapore) have recently overtaken GCC as India's largest remittance source.

[Read Source →](#)

Q50

India's Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) is stored at which locations?

- A** Jamnagar, Kochi, and Chennai
- B** Visakhapatnam, Mangaluru, and Padur
- C** Mumbai, Haldia, and Ennore
- D** Paradip, Kandla, and Mundra

✓ B Visakhapatnam, Mangaluru, and Padur

India's Phase I SPR is stored at three underground rock cavern facilities: Visakhapatnam (1.33 MMT, Andhra Pradesh), Mangaluru (1.5 MMT, Karnataka), and Padur (2.5 MMT, Karnataka). Combined Phase I capacity is 5.33 million metric tonnes (approximately 36.92 million barrels), sufficient for about 9.5 days of consumption. The facilities are managed by Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL), a wholly owned subsidiary of Indian Oil Corporation (IOCL).

✦ India's SPR capacity is far below the IEA-recommended 90-day strategic reserve. Including commercial storage at refineries, India has about 74 days of total crude cover. Phase II expansion is planned at Chandikhol, Odisha (4 MMT) and a second Padur facility (2.5 MMT) under a Public-Private Partnership model, approved in July 2021. India participated in IEA-coordinated SPR releases in 2021 (COVID demand recovery) and 2022 (Russia-Ukraine conflict response).

[Read Source →](#)

Q51

Which of the following countries is NOT a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)?

A Qatar

B Oman

C Jordan

D Bahrain

✓ C **Jordan**

Jordan is NOT a GCC member. The six GCC members are Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman. The GCC Charter was signed on May 25, 1981, and its secretariat is headquartered in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. All six members are Gulf Arab monarchies. Jordan and Yemen have observer/partnership status in some GCC forums but are not full members.

✦ GCC significance for India: approximately 9 million Indians work in GCC countries, contributing ~38% of India's total remittances. GCC-India FTA negotiations resumed in 2022 after being stalled since 2008; bilateral trade reached \$179 billion in FY2024-25. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and UAE's Vision 2031 are driving rapid diversification away from oil dependency, creating new sectors for Indian investment and workforce deployment.

[Read Source →](#)

Q52
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding Exercise Varuna:

1. Exercise Varuna is the bilateral naval exercise between India and France.
2. France has supplied India with Rafale aircraft and Scorpene-class submarines.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. Exercise Varuna is the annual India-France bilateral naval exercise, first conducted in 2001 and now in its 23rd edition (2025). France has supplied India with 36 Rafale jets for the IAF (delivered 2020-22) and 26 Rafale-M jets for the Indian Navy (on order). France built India's six Scorpene-class submarines (Project 75) at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd, Mumbai, under a technology transfer deal.

✦ India-France are Strategic Partners since 1998. France holds Indian Ocean territories (Reunion Island, Mayotte, French Southern Territories), creating shared maritime interests. Key India bilateral naval exercises: MALABAR with QUAD partners (USA, Japan, Australia), KONKAN with UK, VARUNA with France, SIMBEX with Singapore, NASEEM AL-BAHR with Oman, and TASMAN SABER with Australia. The 23rd Varuna (March 2025) featured INS Vikrant and FS Charles de Gaulle conducting anti-submarine warfare and air-defence drills together.

[Read Source →](#)

Q53

India's 'multi-alignment' foreign policy means which of the following?

- A** India aligns with USA, Russia, and China simultaneously on all global issues
- B** India forms issue-specific partnerships and avoids permanent alliances, preserving strategic autonomy
- C** India refuses to sign any bilateral or multilateral agreements
- D** India prioritises SAARC regional cooperation over global engagement

✓ B

India forms issue-specific partnerships and avoids permanent alliances, preserving strategic autonomy

Multi-alignment means India engages multiple major powers simultaneously, building issue-specific coalitions while preserving strategic autonomy and avoiding permanent bloc membership. In practice: India is part of QUAD (with USA, Japan, Australia) for Indo-Pacific security, maintains defence-energy ties with Russia, conducts normal trade with China despite border tensions, and deepens technology diplomacy with the EU and USA.

✦ Multi-alignment is distinct from Cold War-era Non-Alignment (which was passive, avoiding both superpowers). India today actively engages all major powers on its own terms. India chairs or co-leads multiple groupings simultaneously — QUAD, BRICS, SCO, G20, I2U2 (India-Israel-UAE-USA), and IMEC. The doctrine of strategic autonomy was articulated by former NSA Shivshankar Menon and is a core pillar of India's foreign policy doctrine.

[Read Source →](#)

Q54

The SAGAR doctrine (Security and Growth for All in the Region) was first articulated by PM Modi during which visit?

- A During the inaugural QUAD summit in 2021
- B At the UN General Assembly in 2014
- C During PM Modi's visit to Mauritius in March 2015
- D At the BRICS Summit in Johannesburg in 2023

✓ C During PM Modi's visit to Mauritius in March 2015

PM Modi first articulated the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine on March 12, 2015, during his visit to Mauritius, while commissioning an offshore patrol vessel. The doctrine frames India as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region. In March 2025, during another Mauritius visit, Modi upgraded SAGAR to MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security Across the Regions), broadening its scope to include economic connectivity and technology partnership.

✦ SAGAR has five pillars: collective security cooperation, sustainable development, strengthening trade and connectivity, technology and knowledge sharing, and blue economy. The IOS SAGAR (Indian Ocean Ship SAGAR) programme operationalises maritime domain awareness. India assumed chairmanship of IONS (Indian Ocean Naval Symposium) in February 2026. MAHASAGAR (2025) extends SAGAR beyond the Indian Ocean Region to the Global South more broadly.

[Read Source →](#)

Q55
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding India's Strait of Hormuz dependency:

1. The Strait of Hormuz carries approximately 20 million barrels of crude oil and products per day, representing about 25% of the world's seaborne oil trade.
2. The navigable lane in the Strait is only about 3 km wide in each direction.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. The Strait of Hormuz carried approximately 20 million barrels per day (mb/d) of crude oil and oil products in 2025, representing about 25% of the world's seaborne oil trade (per IEA and EIA data). At its narrowest point the Strait is about 33 km wide, with a 2-mile (approximately 3.2 km) navigable channel in each direction plus a 2-mile buffer zone — making the effective shipping lanes extremely constrained.

✦ Other critical energy and trade chokepoints: Strait of Malacca (~30% of global goods trade by value), Suez Canal (~12% of global trade), and Bab-el-Mandeb (Red Sea gateway). India's SPR at 5.33 MMT covers only ~9.5 days of consumption — critically short if Hormuz is blocked. The IEA recommends members hold 90 days of strategic reserves. Beyond crude oil, roughly 20% of global LNG trade also transits Hormuz, making it critical to India's fertiliser and power sectors as well.

[Read Source →](#)

Q56

The RELIEF scheme (Resilience and Logistics Intervention for Export Facilitation) was launched to address which trade disruption?

- A US tariffs on Indian goods under Section 301
- B West Asia conflict escalation around the Strait of Hormuz forcing vessel diversions, longer routes, and emergency freight surcharges
- C China's restrictions on Indian software exports
- D EU carbon border adjustment mechanism affecting Indian exporters

✓ B

West Asia conflict escalation around the Strait of Hormuz forcing vessel diversions, longer routes, and emergency freight surcharges

RELIEF (Resilience and Logistics Intervention for Export Facilitation) is a Rs 497 crore scheme under the Export Promotion Mission, approved in March 2026 by the Ministry of Commerce. It was triggered by the West Asia conflict (Strait of Hormuz crisis) causing vessel diversions, longer sailing routes, congestion at transshipment hubs, and emergency conflict-linked freight and insurance surcharges that hit Indian exporters. ECGC Ltd is the nodal implementing agency.

✦ RELIEF has three components: (1) retroactive coverage for already-insured exporters on shipments during Feb 14 - Mar 15, 2026; (2) prospective cover for exports from Mar 16 - Jun 15, 2026; and (3) partial freight and insurance reimbursement for MSME exporters without ECGC cover (up to Rs 50 lakh per exporter). India also launched Operation Sankalp for Indian Navy deployment in the Red Sea/Gulf of Aden region. During the earlier Red Sea crisis (FY2024), freight rates on key Europe-bound routes rose 90-100% within weeks.

[Read Source →](#)

Q57
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding India-Israel relations:

1. India-Israel relations were upgraded to a Strategic Partnership in 2017 during PM Modi's first visit to Israel.
2. Israel is one of India's top three defence suppliers alongside Russia and France.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. PM Modi's July 2017 visit to Israel — the first-ever by an Indian Prime Minister — upgraded ties to a Strategic Partnership. Israel is India's third largest defence supplier after Russia and France: per SIPRI data for 2020-24, Russia accounts for 36% of India's arms imports, France 33%, and Israel 13%. In February 2026 PM Modi visited Israel again and the partnership was further elevated to a Special Strategic Partnership with 16 agreements signed.

✦ India is Israel's largest arms customer, absorbing 34% of Israeli arms exports during 2020-24. Key India-Israel defence platforms: Barak-8 missile system (co-developed with DRDO), Heron and Heron TP drones, Spike anti-tank missiles, Searcher/Heron UAVs, and Harop loitering munitions. The I2U2 grouping (India, Israel, UAE, USA) is a new quadrilateral focused on water, energy, transport, space, health, and food security. The Knesset is Israel's unicameral parliament with 120 members.

[Read Source →](#)

Geography

Q58

The Lonar Crater Lake in Maharashtra holds which distinction in geological and ecological terms?

- A India's deepest lake at 150 metres depth
- B One of only four known hyper-velocity impact craters in basalt rock globally; also a Ramsar Wetland since 2020
- C India's largest saltwater lake by surface area
- D The oldest lake in the Indian subcontinent, dated to the Archaean era

✓ B One of only four known hyper-velocity impact craters in basalt rock globally; also a Ramsar Wetland since 2020

Lonar Crater Lake in Buldhana district, Maharashtra, is one of only four known hyper-velocity impact craters formed in basalt rock anywhere on Earth — the other three are in southern Brazil. It was designated a Ramsar Wetland Site in 2020. The crater's age is debated: older thermoluminescence estimates give approximately 52,000 years, while recent argon-argon dating suggests approximately 570,000 years. The lake is both saline and alkaline, a rare combination globally.

✦ A hyper-velocity impact crater forms when a meteorite strikes at very high speed, releasing energy comparable to nuclear explosions and excavating country rock — in this case Deccan Trap basalt. USGS has studied Lonar as a Mars analogue site because of its alkaline-saline chemistry resembling proposed Martian lake chemistry. Lonar is a notified National Geo-heritage Monument and a Wildlife Sanctuary. In June 2020, the lake turned pink/red due to Halobacterium growth triggered by elevated salinity during low water levels.

[Read Source →](#)

Q59
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding the Musi River:

1. The Musi River originates in the Anantagiri Hills, Vikarabad district, Telangana.
2. The Musi River is a tributary of the Krishna River.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. The Musi originates in Ananthagiri Hills (also spelled Anantagiri), Vikarabad district, Telangana, formed by the confluence of two rivulets — Esi and Musa. It flows approximately 240 km eastward through Hyderabad before joining the Krishna River as a left-bank tributary near Vadapally, Miryalaguda, in Nalgonda district. Hyderabad was founded in 1591 CE by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah on the Musi's banks.

✦ The catastrophic 1908 Musi flood destroyed vast parts of Hyderabad city, killing thousands, and prompted the Nizam to commission the Osman Sagar and Himayat Sagar reservoirs upstream to regulate flow — engineered by Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya. Other rivers flowing through major Indian cities: Yamuna (Delhi), Sabarmati (Ahmedabad), Mula-Mutha (Pune), Cooum/Adyar (Chennai), Gomti (Lucknow), Tapi (Surat).

[Read Source →](#)

Q60

The Haldia Bulk Terminal is located on which river and has what handling capacity?

- A** Damodar River; 2 million metric tonnes per annum
- B** Hooghly River; 4 million metric tonnes per annum
- C** Brahmaputra River; 6 million metric tonnes per annum
- D** Rupnarayan River; 3 million metric tonnes per annum

✓ B Hooghly River; 4 million metric tonnes per annum

The Haldia Bulk Terminal is located on the Hooghly River at Haldia Dock Complex, West Bengal, and has a handling capacity of 4 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA) of dry bulk cargo (coal, bauxite, limestone). Inaugurated by PM Modi in March 2026, it is India's first fully automated dry bulk terminal, developed by HDC Bulk Terminal Ltd (Adani Ports) under a 30-year DBFOT concession. It includes direct rail connectivity via a 2.10 km conveyor and 1.54 km dedicated railway line.

✦ The Hooghly is a distributary of the Ganga — not a tributary — branching at Nabadwip in West Bengal. The Kolkata Port (now Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, renamed in 2021) handles approximately 60% of India's eastern region dry bulk imports. Haldia Dock Complex is about 55 km downstream from Kolkata and was developed as a satellite port to reduce congestion. The terminal connects to the Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) network, supporting PM GatiShakti National Master Plan logistics integration.

[Read Source →](#)

Q61
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding Chile's critical mineral significance:

1. Chile holds the world's largest known reserves of lithium, approximately 33-36% of global reserves.
2. Chile is also the world's largest copper producer, accounting for approximately 23-27% of global output.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both are correct. Chile holds the world's largest lithium reserves — approximately 9.3 million metric tonnes, representing 33-36% of global reserves (USGS 2024-26 data), concentrated in Atacama Desert brine deposits. Chile is also the world's largest copper producer, continuously since 1983, contributing approximately 23-27% of global output depending on the year (5.3 million MT in 2025).

✦ The Lithium Triangle (Chile, Argentina, Bolivia) together holds approximately 56-60% of global lithium reserves. India's KABIL (Khanij Bidesh India Ltd) is acquiring lithium deposits in Argentina. Lithium is critical for EV batteries (Li-ion); copper is essential for electrical wiring, EV motors, and renewable energy infrastructure. India signed critical mineral MoUs with Australia, Canada, and Argentina.

[Read Source →](#)

Q62

Barak Valley, targeted for development as a trade hub in March 2026, is located in which state and shares borders with which countries/states?

- A Meghalaya; borders Bhutan and Assam
- B Assam; borders Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Bangladesh
- C Manipur; borders Myanmar, Nagaland, and Mizoram
- D Tripura; borders Bangladesh and Mizoram

✓ B Assam; borders Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Bangladesh

Barak Valley is in southern Assam (districts: Cachar, Karimganj, Hailakandi) and borders Meghalaya (north), Manipur (east), Mizoram (south), and Tripura and Bangladesh (west). The Barak River flows into Bangladesh where it splits into the Surma and Koshiyara Rivers. Note that the earlier version of this option omitted Tripura — all five neighbours must be mentioned.

✦ Barak Valley is geographically and culturally distinct from the Brahmaputra Valley (the other major division of Assam). The Sutarkandi Land Port (Cachar district) is a key India-Bangladesh border crossing. PM Modi launched Rs 23,550 crore projects in Silchar for Barak Valley development under the Act East Policy and PM GatiShakti National Master Plan.

[Read Source →](#)

Q63
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur, Odisha:

1. It is managed by DRDO and located on the East Coast (Bay of Bengal).
2. Major missiles tested there include Akash, Prithvi, Dhanush, and VSHORADS.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both are correct. The ITR at Chandipur, Balasore district, Odisha is managed by DRDO on the Bay of Bengal coast. Launch Complex-III at Chandipur handles short-range missiles including Akash (surface-to-air), Prithvi (ballistic), Trishul, Prahar, and Dhanush (naval). VSHORADS was also tested there. The companion facility, Abdul Kalam Island (Launch Complex-IV), handles longer-range systems like Agni and BrahMos.

✦ India tests missiles over the Bay of Bengal because it provides vast open ocean with no civilian overfly risk, and recovery ships can retrieve telemetry. India is a member of MTCR (Missile Technology Control Regime) since 2016 and a founding member of the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (HCoC). The ITR was renamed after Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in 2015.

[Read Source →](#)

Q64

Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary, known for the Gaur (Indian Bison) Festival, is located adjacent to which dam/reservoir?

- A Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada
- B Hirakud Reservoir on the Mahanadi
- C Nagarjuna Sagar Dam on the Krishna
- D Indira Sagar Dam on the Narmada

✓ B Hirakud Reservoir on the Mahanadi

Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary is in Bargarh district, Odisha, bounded on the east and north by the Hirakud Reservoir on the Mahanadi River. Hirakud Dam (completed 1957) was India's first major multipurpose river valley project after independence; at 25.8 km it is one of the world's longest earthen dams. The sanctuary covers 346.91 sq km of dry deciduous forest.

✦ Gaur (*Bos gaurus*) is India's largest wild bovine and the world's largest extant bovine species, classified as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List and protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Despite being called 'Indian Bison', Gaur is not a true bison (bison are a separate genus). Debrigarh is NOT a Tiger Reserve but is an Important Bird Area (IBA) with over 234 bird species.

[Read Source →](#)

Q65

Kolli Hills, the site of Tamil Nadu's first Dark Sky Park, is part of which mountain range?

A Western Ghats

B Satpura Range

C Eastern Ghats

D Vindhya Range

✓ C Eastern Ghats

Kolli Hills (Kolli Malai) in Namakkal district is part of the Eastern Ghats — a common exam trap, as many Tamil Nadu hill stations (Ooty, Kodaikanal, Yercaud) are associated with the Western Ghats. The Eastern Ghats are a discontinuous chain running parallel to the Bay of Bengal coast. Kolli Hills rise to about 1,200 metres and are home to the Arapaleeswarar Temple and rich biodiversity.

✦ Dark Sky Parks are designated by the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA), headquartered in Tucson, Arizona, USA. India's first official Dark Sky Park was established at Pench Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh (2024). Light pollution is a non-chemical form of environmental pollution disrupting nocturnal animal behaviour, bird migration, marine turtle nesting, and insect activity. Eastern Ghats states: Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and partly Telangana.

[Read Source →](#)

History, Art & Culture

Q66
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding the Dandi March of 1930:

1. The march began from Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad on March 12, 1930.
2. Gandhi walked approximately 385 km (240 miles) to Dandi on the Gujarat coast with 78 selected satyagrahis.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both are correct. The Dandi March began on March 12, 1930 from Sabarmati Ashram with 78 satyagrahis, walking approximately 385 km over 24 days to reach Dandi where Gandhi broke the salt law on April 5-6, 1930, triggering the Civil Disobedience Movement. Some sources cite 388 km or 241 miles due to different route measurements; the officially recognised figure is approximately 385 km (240 miles).

✦ Gandhi chose salt because it was a universal necessity affecting the poorest Indians, and the British salt tax (Salt Act 1882) symbolised colonial economic exploitation. Civil Disobedience involved actively breaking specific unjust laws, unlike Non-Cooperation (1920-22) which involved withdrawal from colonial institutions. The Dandi March inspired similar protests across India including Nehru's Allahabad march and C. Rajagopalachari's Vedaranyam March in Tamil Nadu.

[Read Source →](#)

Q67

Savitribai Phule opened the first girls' school in India in 1848. In which city and with whom did she co-found it?

- A Mumbai; co-founded with Fatima Sheikh
- B Pune; co-founded with Jyotirao Phule
- C Nagpur; co-founded with Ramabai Ranade
- D Aurangabad; co-founded with Pandita Ramabai

✓ B Pune; co-founded with Jyotirao Phule

Savitribai Phule (1831-1897) opened the first girls' school at Bhide Wada, Pune on January 1, 1848, together with her husband Jyotirao Phule and Sagunabai Kshirsagar. Fatima Sheikh (a Muslim educator and close friend) later taught at the school and co-founded a separate school with Savitribai in 1849 at the Sheikh's home. Savitribai is regarded as the first female teacher of modern India.

✦ Savitribai Phule was born January 3, 1831 in Naigaon, Satara; she died March 10, 1897 nursing plague patients in Pune — a remarkable act of social service. By 1851, the Phules managed three girls' schools in Pune with approximately 150 students and eventually ran 18 schools. Jyotirao Phule founded Satyashodhak Samaj (1873) to fight Brahminical dominance and caste hierarchy.

[Read Source →](#)

Q68
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding the Jnanpith Award:

1. It is India's highest literary honour, given by the Bharatiya Jnanpith trust (founded 1944).
2. The award comprises a cash prize, a citation, and a bronze statuette of Vagdevi.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both are correct. The Jnanpith Award is India's highest literary honour, instituted by the Bharatiya Jnanpith trust (founded 1944 by Sahu Shanti Prasad Jain; award scheme instituted 1961). It carries Rs 11 lakh cash, a citation, and a bronze statuette of Vagdevi (Saraswati, goddess of learning). R. Vairamuthu received the 60th Jnanpith Award for 2025, becoming only the third Tamil writer to win it.

✦ The Jnanpith Award is open to Indian citizens writing in any of the 22 Eighth Schedule languages plus English. The award is usually presented by the President of India. Tamil was the 3rd language to receive a Jnanpith after Sanskrit (1966) and Hindi. Previous Tamil winners: P.V. Akilan (1975) and D. Jayakanthan (2002). Note: the Bharatiya Jnanpith trust was founded in 1944 but the award itself was first conferred in 1965 (for 1961).

[Read Source →](#)

Q69

The Sahitya Akademi gives awards in how many languages, and which languages beyond the 22 Eighth Schedule languages does it include?

A 22 languages; only the Eighth Schedule languages

B 23 languages; adds English only

C 24 languages; adds English and Rajasthani

D 25 languages; adds English, Rajasthani, and Sindhi

✓ C 24 languages; adds English and Rajasthani

The Sahitya Akademi gives awards in 24 languages — the 22 Scheduled languages of the Eighth Schedule plus English and Rajasthani. Rajasthani is not in the Eighth Schedule despite repeated demands. The Sahitya Akademi was established in 1954 under the Ministry of Education and is India's national academy of letters.

✦ The 92nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003 added Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, and Santhali to the Eighth Schedule, taking the total from 18 to 22. The Sahitya Akademi prize comprises Rs 1 lakh cash, a copper plaque, and a shawl. The Sahitya Akademi also gives Bal Sahitya Puraskar (children's literature) and Yuva Puraskar (young writers) in the same 24 languages.

[Read Source →](#)

Q70

Which of the following is NOT one of India's current officially recognised Classical Languages? (Note: In October 2024, the Union Cabinet expanded the list from 6 to 11.)

A Odia

B Marathi

C Nepali

D Bengali

✓ C Nepali

As of October 2024, India has 11 Classical Languages: Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia (the original six), plus Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali (five added by Cabinet on October 3, 2024). Nepali is NOT a Classical Language. Tamil was the first (2004); Odia the last of the original six (2014).

✦ Criteria for Classical Language status (revised 2024 by the Linguistics Experts Committee under Sahitya Akademi): recorded history/antiquity over 1,500-2,000 years; body of ancient literature considered a heritage; prose texts and epigraphical evidence; may be distinct from or discontinuous with modern forms. The October 2024 expansion is a critical update — questions framing India as having only 6 Classical Languages are now outdated.

[Read Source →](#)

Q71
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding Göbekli Tepe:

1. It was built approximately 12,000 years ago (around 9600 BCE) by hunter-gatherer communities.
2. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in south-eastern Turkey.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both are correct. Göbekli Tepe dates to ~9600-8200 BCE (roughly 11,500-12,000 years old), built by pre-agricultural hunter-gatherers with no farming, pottery, or writing. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2018, located in the Germus mountains of Sanliurfa (Urfa) province in south-eastern Turkey. German archaeologist Klaus Schmidt identified its significance in 1994 and led excavations from 1995.

✦ Göbekli Tepe predates Stonehenge by approximately 6,600 years and the Egyptian pyramids by approximately 7,100 years. It fundamentally challenges the assumption that farming must precede complex social organisation and monumental architecture — here, ritual structures came first. India's Bhimbetka rock paintings (Madhya Pradesh) date to ~30,000 BCE but are rock art sites, not structured temples.

[Read Source →](#)

Q72

The 1954 Hague Convention protects which assets during armed conflict?

- A Food and humanitarian aid supplies
- B Cultural property — movable and immovable assets of great importance to cultural heritage
- C Civilian hospitals and medical infrastructure
- D Critical digital infrastructure and data centres


B

Cultural property — movable and immovable assets of great importance to cultural heritage

The 1954 Hague Convention (formally: Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict) protects movable and immovable cultural property — museums, monuments, archaeological sites, archives, libraries, works of art, and scientific collections — from destruction, seizure, and looting during armed conflict. It entered into force in 1956 and has 138 state parties. India is a party to the Convention.

✦ The ICC (International Criminal Court) prosecuted Ahmad Al-Mahdi (Mali, 2016) — the first person convicted specifically for cultural heritage destruction as a war crime (destruction of religious and historic monuments in Timbuktu). Famous cultural property destruction: Buddhas of Bamiyan by Taliban (2001), Palmyra ruins by ISIS (2015). The Blue Shield organisation plays a role analogous to the Red Cross but for cultural heritage in conflict.

[Read Source →](#)

Social Issues

Q73
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements about Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM):

1. JJM was launched in August 2019 under the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
2. FHTC (Functional Household Tap Connection) requires water flowing at a minimum of 55 litres per capita per day.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. JJM was formally launched on 15 August 2019 by PM Modi under the Ministry of Jal Shakti (Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation), with the goal of providing tap water to all 19 crore rural households. An FHTC is defined as a tap connection supplying potable water at a minimum of 55 litres per capita per day (LPCD) at adequate pressure — a mere installed tap that delivers no water does not qualify.

✦ The 55 LPCD norm aligns with WHO and BIS standards for safe rural water supply. JJM mandates formation of Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSCs) or Paani Samitis for operation and maintenance. Over 25 lakh women have been trained as Jal Sakhis (water quality testers). The mission expanded rural tap coverage from 3.23 crore (17%) households in 2019 to over 15 crore households by 2025, with the deadline extended to 2028 for full saturation. JJM is implemented in convergence with SBM-G (Phase II) and MGNREGS for infrastructure creation.

[Read Source →](#)

Q74

International Women's Day on March 8 was formally adopted by which organisation in 1975?

- A World Health Organization
- B International Labour Organization
- C United Nations
- D UNICEF

✓ C United Nations

The United Nations formally adopted International Women's Day on March 8 in 1975 during the International Women's Year (IWY). The First UN World Conference on Women was held in Mexico City in 1975, leading to the World Plan of Action. In 1977, the UN General Assembly further invited all member states to proclaim any day as the UN Day for Women's Rights and International Peace, institutionalising the occasion globally.

✦ IWD has roots in early 20th-century labour movements — the 1908 garment workers strike in New York and the 1917 women's bread-and-peace march in Petrograd (Russia) that sparked the February Revolution. India's key gender indices for UPSC: Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Inequality Index (GII) published by UNDP; Global Gender Gap Index by WEF. The UN Decade for Women ran 1976-1985. CEDAW (1979) is the landmark international treaty on women's rights, often called the international bill of rights for women.

[Read Source →](#)

Q75
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding India's double burden of malnutrition:

1. India simultaneously experiences undernutrition/stunting and rising obesity, especially in urban areas.
2. PM POSHAN (formerly Mid-Day Meal) and POSHAN Abhiyan are programmes addressing undernutrition.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. India's double burden of malnutrition describes the paradoxical coexistence of persistent undernutrition (stunting, wasting, anaemia) alongside a rapid rise in overweight and obesity, particularly in urban middle classes. According to NFHS-5 (2020-21), 24% of women aged 15-49 are overweight or obese while 32% of children under 5 are stunted. PM POSHAN (formerly Mid-Day Meal Scheme) targets school nutrition; POSHAN Abhiyan (National Nutrition Mission, 2018) targets children under 6, pregnant women, and lactating mothers.

✦ Other key nutrition programmes include ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services), PM Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) for maternity benefit, and Anaemia Mukh Bharat. FSSAI has introduced Front-of-Pack Labelling (FOPL) to flag high sugar/salt/fat foods to address overnutrition. The Global Hunger Index (GHI) and NFHS data are the primary sources used to track India's nutrition outcomes. NEP 2020 introduced Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) Mission, recognising the link between nutrition and cognitive development in early childhood.

[Read Source →](#)

Q76

The World Happiness Report 2026 found declining happiness among youth in developed countries most linked to which factor?

- A Rising income inequality and cost of living
- B Climate anxiety and environmental concerns
- C Excessive social media use, especially 5 or more hours daily
- D Decline in religious participation and community bonds

✓ C Excessive social media use, especially 5 or more hours daily

The World Happiness Report 2026 found that teenagers using social media 5 or more hours per day report significantly lower well-being, with the impact most pronounced among girls. The report links the sharp decline in youth happiness in the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand to widespread smartphone and social media adoption from around 2012. India ranked 116th in WHR 2026, two places up from 118th in 2025.

✦ The World Happiness Report is published annually by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) using Gallup World Poll data, which measures subjective well-being via the Cantril Life Satisfaction Ladder (respondents rate their life on a scale of 0-10). Finland topped the rankings for the ninth consecutive year in 2026, followed by Iceland and Denmark. The report was released on March 20 — the International Day of Happiness (proclaimed by the UN in 2013). For UPSC: the report is relevant to GS-1 (Society), GS-2 (Governance), and Essay on social well-being.

[Read Source →](#)

Q77

India's malaria elimination commitment calls for interruption of all indigenous transmission by which target year under the National Framework for Malaria Elimination (NFME)?

A 2025

B 2027

C 2030

D 2035

✓ B 2027

Under the National Framework for Malaria Elimination (NFME) 2016-2030, India committed to interrupting all indigenous malaria transmission (zero indigenous cases across all states and UTs) by 2027. A separate milestone required reducing the Annual Parasite Index (API) to less than 1 per 1,000 population in all states by 2024. The 2030 target is to maintain a malaria-free status nationwide. India exited the WHO High-Burden-to-High-Impact group in 2024, reporting only 83 deaths in 2023 compared to 8 lakh deaths at independence.

✦ Malaria elimination is defined as zero indigenous (locally acquired) cases, distinct from eradication (global extinction of the parasite). API (Annual Parasite Index) = confirmed malaria cases per 1,000 population per year. High-burden states: Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Meghalaya. Treatment protocol: Chloroquine for *P. vivax*; ACT (Artemisinin-based Combination Therapy) for *P. falciparum*. The National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination (NMESP) 2023-2027 uses a Test-Treat-Track approach via the Integrated Health Information Platform (IHIP). India accounts for approximately 2-3% of global malaria cases.

[Read Source →](#)

Q78
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding Women's SHGs in India:

1. Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-NRLM (DAY-NRLM) has mobilised over 10 crore rural women into approximately 90 lakh SHGs.
2. The SHG-Bank Linkage Programme was started in 1992 by NABARD.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. DAY-NRLM (launched 2011 as NRLM, renamed 2015) has mobilised over 10 crore rural women into approximately 90 lakh SHGs as of 2025. NABARD formally launched the SHG-Bank Linkage Programme in 1992 in collaboration with RBI and commercial banks; from about 500 SHGs linked to banks in 1992-93, it grew into the world's largest microfinance programme with over 12 million credit-linked SHGs by 2023.

✦ SHGs function as informal financial intermediaries — members save regularly, build a corpus, and access small internal loans. Once the SHG builds a repayment track record, banks extend external credit. The Lakhpati Didi initiative (2023) targets upgrading 2 crore SHG women to annual income exceeding Rs 1 lakh. SHGs also serve as delivery channels for PMJDY, insurance, nutrition supplements, and sanitation schemes under Swachh Bharat. Nearly 90% of all SHGs are women's groups, making this the world's largest women's microfinance programme.

[Read Source →](#)

Q79

The leaky pipeline problem in women's STEM representation refers to which of the following?

- A There are insufficient water supply engineers who are women
- B Barriers accumulate at multiple stages from school through career advancement, causing women to leave the field at each stage
- C Women are concentrated in oil and gas pipeline engineering
- D STEM programmes do not have proper financial pipelines for female students

✓ B

Barriers accumulate at multiple stages from school through career advancement, causing women to leave the field at each stage

The leaky pipeline metaphor describes the gradual loss of women from STEM at successive career stages — stereotype threat and social norms deter girls from choosing STEM in school; admission and hiring biases filter women at entry; mid-career barriers (the motherhood penalty, mentorship gaps, glass ceiling) reduce retention further; and women remain underrepresented at senior leadership and R&D levels. Leakage happens throughout the pipeline, not at any single point, making systemic intervention necessary at every stage.

✦ Women hold fewer than 15% of senior R&D positions in ISRO, DRDO, and IITs. The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 extended paid maternity leave to 26 weeks for establishments with 10 or more employees, addressing one mid-career barrier. SERB (Science and Engineering Research Board) runs the POWER (Promoting Opportunities for Women in Exploratory Research) scheme to support women scientists. Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATI) is a pilot charter for women in STEM, implemented through DST. UPSC relevance: GS-1 (Women empowerment), GS-2 (Governance), Essay.

[Read Source →](#)

Q80

Mission Amrit Sarovar was launched in April 2022 with what target, and achieves implementation through which mechanism?

- A 25,000 ponds; dedicated central authority with direct panchayat funding
- B 50,000 ponds (75 per district); convergence with MGNREGA, district planning, and multiple ministries
- C 1,00,000 ponds; PPP with real estate developers
- D 75,000 ponds; state government borrowing through municipal bonds


B

50,000 ponds (75 per district); convergence with MGNREGA, district planning, and multiple ministries

Mission Amrit Sarovar was launched on 24 April 2022 (National Panchayati Raj Day) targeting construction or rejuvenation of 75 ponds per district, totalling approximately 50,000 ponds nationwide, by August 15, 2023 — India's 75th Independence Day. As of March 2025 over 68,000 ponds have been completed, exceeding the original target. Implementation works through convergence with MGNREGA, 15th Finance Commission grants, PMKSY, and seven ministries including Rural Development, Jal Shakti, and Railways.

✦ Each Amrit Sarovar is designed to have a minimum pondage area of 1 acre (0.4 hectare) with a water-holding capacity of about 10,000 cubic metres. Local water bodies provide groundwater recharge, minor irrigation, livestock water, fisheries, and microclimate regulation. The mission was launched as a tribute to Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav (75 years of independence), hence the 75 ponds per district target. Under MGNREGA, water conservation works including pond desilting are among the most common permissible activities. This convergence reduces duplication and stretches government budgets.

[Read Source →](#)

Security & Defence

Q81
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS):

1. LAWS are being discussed at the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW).
2. India's position has been for a binding international ban treaty on fully autonomous lethal systems.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ A 1 only

Statement 1 is correct — LAWS have been debated under the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) since 2014 through the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE). Statement 2 is incorrect — India opposes a legally binding instrument on LAWS, instead supporting a voluntary political declaration aligned with the Eleven Guiding Principles (2019) of the GGE, which emphasise human oversight and IHL compliance. Countries such as Austria and New Zealand advocate a pre-emptive binding ban; the USA, Russia, China, Israel, and India oppose it.

✦ Meaningful Human Control (MHC) is the central concept in the LAWS debate — it requires that a human with adequate information and time must make or authorise any lethal targeting decision. India's position is grounded in strategic autonomy: a binding ban could constrain India's ability to develop autonomous defence technologies it considers necessary for national security, especially on its borders with China and Pakistan. The CCW (1980) is administered under the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA). In December 2025, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 80/57 on LAWS which India supported.

[Read Source →](#)

Q82

VSHORADS, successfully tested at Chandipur, belongs to which category of weapon system?

- A BVRAAM — Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (air-launched)
- B MANPADS — Man-Portable Air Defence System (shoulder-fired)
- C LACM — Land Attack Cruise Missile
- D SRBM — Short Range Ballistic Missile

✓ B MANPADS — Man-Portable Air Defence System (shoulder-fired)

VSHORADS (Very Short Range Air Defence System) is a fourth-generation MANPADS — a man-portable, shoulder-fired missile system designed to neutralise low-altitude aerial threats including fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, UAVs, and drones. Developed by Research Centre Imarat (RCI), Hyderabad, under DRDO, it was successfully tested multiple times at the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, Odisha, with development officially completed in October 2024. It replaces India's ageing Russian Igla MANPADS.

✦ MANPADS are effective up to approximately 4-6 km slant range and 3-4 km altitude, making them lethal against low-flying threats. VSHORADS incorporates miniaturised Reaction Control System (RCS) and integrated avionics, propelled by a dual-thrust solid motor. India joined the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in 2016. The ITR at Chandipur, Odisha (Bay of Bengal coast) is DRDO's primary missile test range. VSHORADS is a key Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative reducing dependence on Russian imports in this category.

[Read Source →](#)

Q83

Exercise Vayushakti, the Indian Air Force's premier firepower demonstration, is conducted at which location?

- A Suratgarh Airbase, Rajasthan
- B Barmer Field Range, Rajasthan
- C Pokhran Field Firing Range, Jaisalmer
- D Bikaner Desert Range, Rajasthan

✓ C Pokhran Field Firing Range, Jaisalmer

Exercise Vayushakti is conducted at the Pokhran Field Firing Range in Jaisalmer district, Rajasthan — the same site as India's nuclear tests (Pokhran-I, 1974 and Pokhran-II Shakti, 1998). Vayushakti-26 (February 27, 2026) was witnessed by President Droupadi Murmu and featured over 130 aircraft including Rafale, Su-30 MKI, Mirage-2000, MiG-29, Jaguar, and the LCH Prachand, delivering approximately 120 tonnes of ordnance in three hours.

✦ Vayushakti-26 was the first edition conducted under a defined operational storyline, integrating offensive air strikes, air defence (Akash, SPYDER SAMs), special forces, and humanitarian assistance missions. LCH Prachand (Light Combat Helicopter), built by HAL, is India's first indigenously developed combat helicopter and entered IAF service in 2022; it can operate at high-altitude locations including Siachen. World Athletics is headquartered in Monaco. Vayushakti exercises are typically held every 4-5 years.

[Read Source →](#)

Q84
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding drones and modern warfare:

1. Drone swarms involve dozens or hundreds of low-cost drones coordinated by AI algorithms to overwhelm defences.
2. Loitering munitions (kamikaze drones) were used effectively by Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (2020), not co-ordinated drone swarm tactics.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. Statement 1 accurately defines drone swarms — AI-coordinated large numbers of low-cost drones designed to saturate and overwhelm air defences. Statement 2 is correct: Azerbaijan's decisive edge in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war came from Israeli Harop and Orbiter loitering munitions (kamikaze drones) and Turkish Bayraktar TB2 strike drones — coordinated with artillery — not from swarm tactics. True AI-driven drone swarms remain a developing capability; no combatant deployed them in Nagorno-Karabakh.

✦ The Nagorno-Karabakh war (September–November 2020) is regarded as a paradigm-shifting conflict demonstrating the lethality of cheap unmanned systems against expensive conventional forces. Harop is an anti-radiation loitering munition (Israeli, IAI) that autonomously homes on radar emissions. India is developing indigenous drone and counter-drone capabilities under iDEX and DRDO's swarm drone programme. The Ukraine-Russia conflict (2022-) further demonstrated how low-cost Shahed-136 drones can overwhelm expensive air defence systems, validating the cost-asymmetry argument. India's DATS (Drone Action Task Scheme) and anti-drone systems like Mk III counter-UAS address this gap.

[Read Source →](#)

Q85

INS Anjadip, India's third Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft, was built by which Defence PSU?

- A** Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL), Mumbai
- B** Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata
- C** Hindustan Shipyard Ltd (HSL), Visakhapatnam
- D** Cochin Shipyard Ltd (CSL), Kochi

✓ B Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata

INS Anjadip was designed and built by GRSE (Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers), Kolkata, and commissioned on 27 February 2026 at Chennai. It is the third ship of the Arnala class, is 77 metres long, displaces approximately 1,400 tonnes, achieves 25 knots via water-jet propulsion, and carries nearly 88% indigenous content including indigenously made 30 mm naval guns and anti-submarine rockets. It is named after Anjadip Island near Karwar, Karnataka.

✦ India's major naval shipbuilders serve distinct roles: MDL (Mumbai) builds submarines and destroyers; GRSE (Kolkata) specialises in corvettes, patrol vessels, and ASW shallow-water craft; HSL (Visakhapatnam) builds support and repair vessels; CSL (Kochi) built India's first indigenous aircraft carrier, INS Vikrant. India's Defence Acquisition Policy targets 70% domestic procurement by 2027. The ASW Shallow Water Craft programme addresses the strategic need to counter submarines in littoral (shallow coastal) waters, an increasingly contested domain in the Indian Ocean Region.

[Read Source →](#)

Q86
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding International Humanitarian Law (IHL):

1. The four Geneva Conventions (1949) are the primary IHL instruments.
2. IHL aims to prevent armed conflicts from occurring rather than limiting their effects.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ A 1 only

Statement 1 is correct — the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 (GC-I to GC-IV) are the foundational IHL instruments, complemented by the Additional Protocols of 1977. Statement 2 is incorrect — IHL does NOT aim to prevent armed conflicts; that is the purpose of the UN Charter (*jus ad bellum*). IHL (*jus in bello*) exclusively limits the conduct and effects of war by protecting civilians, POWs, and the wounded, and by restricting means and methods of warfare.

✦ The four Geneva Conventions cover: GC-I (wounded and sick soldiers on land), GC-II (wounded, sick, and shipwrecked at sea), GC-III (prisoners of war), and GC-IV (civilians under enemy occupation). Additional Protocol I (1977) covers international armed conflicts; Additional Protocol II covers non-international conflicts. The ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), headquartered in Geneva, is the guardian of IHL. Key IHL principles: distinction (combatants vs. civilians), proportionality (no excessive civilian harm), and military necessity.

[Read Source →](#)

Q87

White phosphorus munitions used primarily as smoke screens or target markers on the battlefield occupy what legal status under CCW Protocol III on Incendiary Weapons?

- A** Fully prohibited under Protocol III because white phosphorus always causes severe burns
- B** Excluded from Protocol III's definition because Protocol III covers only munitions 'primarily designed' to cause burn injuries, and white phosphorus is often classified as a smoke or signalling munition
- C** Covered and permitted under Protocol III when used against military targets only
- D** Regulated under CCW Protocol II (mines and booby traps) rather than Protocol III

Excluded from Protocol III's definition because Protocol III covers only

✓ B munitions 'primarily designed' to cause burn injuries, and white phosphorus is often classified as a smoke or signalling munition

CCW Protocol III covers 'incendiary weapons' defined as munitions 'primarily designed' to set fire or cause burn injuries. White phosphorus, when deployed as a smoke screen, illuminant, or target marker, does not meet this primary-design test and therefore falls outside Protocol III's scope — a widely criticised legal loophole. Human rights organisations (HRW, ICRC) have called for amending Protocol III to explicitly include multipurpose munitions like white phosphorus, which cause severe and often fatal burn injuries regardless of stated primary purpose.

✦ The CCW (Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, 1980) has five protocols: Protocol I (non-detectable fragments), Protocol II (mines and booby traps), Protocol III (incendiary weapons), Protocol IV (blinding laser weapons), Protocol V (explosive remnants of war). The definitional loophole in Protocol III is that it exempts munitions with incendiary effects that are 'incidental' — such as illuminants, tracers, smoke, and signalling systems. This allows white phosphorus artillery shells to escape Protocol III's restrictions even when used in populated areas. White phosphorus burns at approximately 815 degrees Celsius and is extremely difficult to extinguish. India is a signatory to the CCW.

[Read Source →](#)

Reports, Indices & Schemes

Q88

India's ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) indicates which longstanding concern about school education outcomes?

- A Teacher-student ratios are too high across all states
- B High enrolment rates have not translated into adequate learning outcomes — reading and arithmetic deficits persist
- C School infrastructure is the primary barrier to quality education in India
- D India has too many private schools, reducing government school enrolment

✓ B

High enrolment rates have not translated into adequate learning outcomes — reading and arithmetic deficits persist

ASER 2024 found that despite record enrolment, 76.6% of Class 3 students in government schools still cannot read a Class 2 text, and 66.3% of Class 3 students cannot perform simple subtraction. This enrollment-without-learning crisis is ASER's central finding since 2005 and directly informed the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) mission under NEP 2020, which targets universal basic reading and arithmetic by Grade 3. ASER is India's largest annual household-based learning survey, covering approximately 650,000 children across 600+ rural districts.

✦ ASER is published by Pratham, India's largest education NGO, founded in 1994. NEP 2020 introduced NIPUN Bharat (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy) as the FLN mission, with a target of achieving foundational literacy and numeracy for all children by Grade 3 by 2026-27. The National Curriculum Framework for the Foundational Stage (NCF-FS 2022) guides early childhood education (ages 3-8) and is India's first such framework in decades. ASER's methodology — household-based testing by trained volunteers — differs from school-based surveys and captures out-of-school children too.

[Read Source →](#)

Q89
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding Mission Basundhara 3.0:

1. It is a digital land-governance programme belonging to Assam.
2. It connects with the national SVAMITVA scheme which uses drone-based aerial surveys for rural property mapping.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. Mission Basundhara 3.0 is Assam's flagship digital land-governance programme, launched on 20 October 2024, using drone surveys, GIS technology, and high-accuracy mapping to digitise land records and issue formal land pattas (ownership documents). Over 1 lakh pattas were distributed in February 2026. SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages Abadi and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas), launched nationally in April 2020 under the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, uses drone-based aerial surveys to map inhabited (abadi) areas of villages and generate Property Cards (Swamitva Cards).

✦ SVAMITVA is implemented by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj in collaboration with the Survey of India and state Revenue Departments. As of April 2025, approximately 2.42 crore property cards have been created for 1.61 lakh villages, with drone surveys completed in 3.20 lakh villages out of 6.60 lakh total. Mission Basundhara 1.0 (2021) converted annual pattas to periodic pattas; 2.0 granted land rights to indigenous communities on government land; 3.0 targets integration of Non-Cadastral (NC) villages and digitisation of remaining records. Both schemes directly support formalising land rights, which enables collateral-based rural credit.

[Read Source →](#)

Q90

The PMFME (PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises) Scheme operates on which specific approach?

- A** Universal Basic Support — all micro food enterprises receive equal grants
- B** One District One Product (ODOP) — each district identifies a specific product and builds an ecosystem around it
- C** Cluster Development Programme — enterprises in industrial clusters only
- D** Export-Linked Scheme — only enterprises with export potential receive support

✓ B

One District One Product (ODOP) — each district identifies a specific product and builds an ecosystem around it

PMFME operates on the One District One Product (ODOP) approach — each district identifies a specific traditional food product and all scheme support (credit-linked capital subsidy of 35% up to Rs 10 lakh per unit, common infrastructure, marketing) is concentrated around that product cluster. Approved ODOP products have been mapped for all 713 districts across 35 States/UTs. Launched under AatmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyan with an outlay of Rs 10,000 crore over five years (2020-21 to 2024-25), the scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) and targets formalisation of 2 lakh micro food enterprises.

✦ ODOP was originally a State Government initiative (Uttar Pradesh) before being adopted nationally under DPIIT for handicrafts and PMFME for food processing. Examples of ODOP products: Muzaffarpur (litchi products), Assam districts (Joha aromatic rice), Kolhapur (jaggery), Varanasi (paan/betel products). Tezpur University (Assam) hosts a Common Incubation Centre under PMFME. The scheme complements the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY), which funds larger food processing infrastructure. Micro enterprises are defined as units with investment below Rs 1 crore and turnover below Rs 5 crore.

[Read Source →](#)

Q91

Geographical Indications (GI) tags in India are registered under which legislation and administered by which registry?

- A** Intellectual Property Rights Act, 2005; administered by SEBI
- B** Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999; administered by the GI Registry under CGPDTM, Chennai
- C** Agriculture Produce (Grading and Marking) Act, 1937; administered by APEDA
- D** Trade Marks Act, 1999; administered by Trade Marks Registry, Mumbai

✓ B

Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999; administered by the GI Registry under CGPDTM, Chennai

GI tags in India are registered under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 — enacted to comply with the TRIPS Agreement (WTO, Article 22-24). The Act came into force on 15 September 2003. The GI Registry is located in Chennai and functions under the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks (CGPDTM), which is under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Darjeeling Tea (October 2004) was India's first registered GI. India now has 600+ registered GIs.

✦ GI protection prevents producers outside the designated region from using the product name and associated reputation. Key GI-registered products: Darjeeling Tea (West Bengal), Basmati Rice (multiple states), Kanchipuram Silk, Mysore Silk, Alphonso Mango (Ratnagiri/Devgad), Kolhapuri Chappal, Pashmina (Ladakh), Tirupati Laddu, Malabar Pepper. Unlike trademarks (owned by a single entity), GIs protect collective rights of all producers in the region. The GI Act distinguishes between 'Producer' (entitled to use the GI) and 'Authorised User' (registered for enhanced protection). India's GI-tagged products contribute significantly to agricultural export earnings.

[Read Source →](#)

Q92
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements about India's Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme approved in March 2026:

1. It covers projects of 1-25 MW capacity administered by MNRE.
2. North Eastern states receive higher central assistance than other states.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. The Cabinet-approved SHP Development Scheme (FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31) covers projects of 1-25 MW capacity under MNRE, with a total outlay of Rs 2,584.60 crore targeting 1,500 MW of new capacity by FY 2030-31. North Eastern States and border districts receive central financial assistance of Rs 3.6 crore per MW or 30% of project cost (whichever is lower, capped at Rs 30 crore per project), compared to Rs 2.4 crore per MW or 20% of project cost for other states (capped at Rs 20 crore per project).

✦ Small hydro power (1-25 MW) is classified as renewable energy under MNRE. India has an estimated small hydro potential of over 21,000 MW, of which only about 5,000 MW has been harnessed. The Northeast has the highest untapped potential due to its riverine terrain. India's updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) targets 500 GW of non-fossil electricity capacity by 2030, of which small hydro is a key component alongside solar and wind. Unlike large hydro projects (classified under Ministry of Power), small hydro avoids large-scale displacement and has minimal environmental footprint.

[Read Source →](#)

Q93

The World Bank's UP Clean Air Management Program loan of \$300 million was provided through which World Bank lending arm?

- A** IDA (International Development Association)
- B** IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development)
- C** IFC (International Finance Corporation)
- D** MIGA (Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency)

✓ B IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development)

The UP Clean Air Management Program (\$299.66 million loan plus \$5 million grant, signed March 2026) is financed through IBRD — the World Bank arm that lends to middle-income and creditworthy countries like India at near-market rates, with long maturities. IDA lends exclusively to the world's poorest countries at highly concessional (near-zero interest) rates. India is an IBRD borrower, not an IDA-eligible country. The program targets clean air transition in transport, industry (700+ brick kilns), and agriculture sectors across Uttar Pradesh, benefiting ~270 million people.

✦ The World Bank Group has five institutions: IBRD (middle-income countries), IDA (poorest countries), IFC (private sector in developing countries), MIGA (investment guarantees against non-commercial risks), and ICSID (investment dispute settlement). India is one of IBRD's largest borrowers. The UP program is part of India's National Clean Air Programme (NCAP, 2019), which targets a 20-30% reduction in PM2.5 and PM10 concentrations in 122 non-attainment cities by 2024 (revised target: 40% reduction by 2026). Zig-Zag kiln technology, promoted under the program, reduces coal consumption by 20-25% and PM emissions by 60-70% compared to traditional Fixed Chimney Bull's Trench Kilns.

[Read Source →](#)

Q94
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India):

1. TRIFED was established in 1987 under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
2. TRIFED manages Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) — SHG-based centres for value-addition of minor forest produce.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India) was established in August 1987 under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 1984, and became operational in 1988 under the administrative control of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. TRIFED implements the Van Dhan Vikas Yojana through a network of 50,000 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) — each VDVK is an SHG-based cluster of 15 tribal beneficiaries — which provide skill upgradation, primary processing, and value-addition facilities for Minor Forest Produce (MFP).

✦ TRIFED's key programmes: Van Dhan Vikas Yojana (MFP value addition), Tribes India (retail brand for tribal products), Aadi Mahotsav (national tribal festival), Sankalp se Siddhi, and RISA (a programme connecting Northeastern tribal weavers with fashion designers for global market access). TRIFED is distinct from ITDC (India Tourism Development Corporation, 1966, under Ministry of Tourism). Minor Forest Produce (MFP) includes bamboo, tendu leaves, mahua, honey, lac, and medicinal plants — the primary livelihood source for 50+ million tribals. The Forest Rights Act (2006) grants tribal communities legal rights over MFP collection.

[Read Source →](#)

Q95

The Haldia Bulk Terminal was awarded to which private port operator under a DBFOT model with a 30-year concession?

- A JSW Infrastructure Limited
- B Mundra Port and Special Economic Zone
- C APSEZ (Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd) via HDC Bulk Terminal Ltd
- D Essar Ports Limited



APSEZ (Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd) via HDC Bulk Terminal Ltd

The Haldia Bulk Terminal (HBT) within the Haldia Dock Complex of Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata, was developed by HDC Bulk Terminal Ltd — a subsidiary of APSEZ (Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd) — under a 30-year DBFOT (Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer) concession. Construction commenced on 14 July 2023 and PM Modi commissioned the terminal on 14 March 2026. It is India's first fully automated dry bulk facility, with a 4 MMTPA annual capacity and a dedicated 1.54 km railway line for direct ship-to-train cargo transfer.

✦ DBFOT places design, construction, financing, and operational risk entirely on the private operator, with the asset reverting to the government after the concession period — unlike BOT Toll (revenue risk with private party) or EPC (no operational involvement by private party). Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port (formerly Kolkata Port Trust, renamed 2021) is the only riverine major port in India and handles a significant share of eastern India's dry bulk imports. PPP models in Indian port infrastructure: BOT, BOOT, BOO, DBFOT, and OMT (Operate, Maintain and Transfer for existing assets). India's Sagarmala programme targets port-led industrialisation.

[Read Source →](#)

Q96

Cotton Corporation of India (CCI), which procures cotton under MSP operations, functions under which Ministry?

A Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare

B Ministry of Textiles

C Ministry of Commerce and Industry

D Ministry of Finance

✓ B **Ministry of Textiles**

CCI (Cotton Corporation of India) is a Public Sector Undertaking established on 31 July 1970 under the Ministry of Textiles. It is the central government agency responsible for MSP operations for seed cotton (kapas): when market prices fall below the MSP level, CCI procures cotton directly from farmers. In March 2026, the Cabinet approved Rs 1,718.56 crore as reimbursement to CCI for MSP procurement of 32.84 lakh bales during the 2023-24 season, benefiting approximately 7.25 lakh farmers. The MSP for kapas for 2025-26 was set at Rs 7,710 per quintal.

✦ India is the world's largest cotton producer, with approximately 6 million cotton farmers and 6.5 million hectares under cultivation. Major cotton-growing states: Maharashtra, Gujarat, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Punjab. The Price Support Scheme (PSS), under which CCI operates, is overseen by the Ministry of Agriculture but implemented by commodity-specific CPSEs (CCI for cotton, NAFED for oilseeds and pulses). India recently became the largest supplier of cotton products to the USA. Cotton (*Gossypium* species) is India's most important commercial crop and contributes significantly to textile export earnings (~\$44 billion in FY 2023-24).

[Read Source →](#)

Persons & Awards in News

Q97

R. Vairamuthu received which edition of the Jnanpith Award and is the third Tamil writer to receive this honour. Who were the previous two Tamil Jnanpith laureates?

A Bharathidasan (1968) and Sundara Ramasamy (1985)

B P.V. Akilan (1975) and D. Jayakanthan (2002)

C Kalki (1970) and Pudumaipithan (1990)

D T. Janakiraman (1972) and Sujatha (1998)

✓ B **P.V. Akilan (1975) and D. Jayakanthan (2002)**

R. Vairamuthu received the 60th Jnanpith Award for 2025, making him the third Tamil laureate after P.V. Akilan (1975) and D. Jayakanthan (2002). The Jnanpith Award, conferred by Bharatiya Jnanpith trust (founded 1944), carries a cash prize of Rs 11 lakh, a bronze statuette of Vagdevi (Goddess Saraswati), and a citation. The award has been given annually since 1965.

✦ The Jnanpith Award is India's highest literary honour, open to Indian citizens writing in any of the 22 Eighth Schedule languages plus English. Vairamuthu is celebrated for his contributions to Tamil poetry, lyric writing, and prose — he has penned over 7,000 film songs. Only three Tamil writers have received the award in 60 editions, reflecting the competitive pan-India nature of the selection.

[Read Source →](#)

Q98
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding para athletics classifications:

1. T63 refers to athletes with single below-knee amputation competing with a running prosthesis.
2. India won its best-ever Paralympic performance at Paris 2024 with 29 medals including 7 gold.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ B 2 only

Statement 1 is incorrect — T63 refers to athletes with a single above-knee (through or above the knee joint) amputation using a running prosthesis; T64 refers to single below-knee amputation.

Statement 2 is correct — India won 29 medals (7 gold, 9 silver, 13 bronze) at the Paris 2024 Paralympics, its best-ever tally. Sumit Antil (F64 Javelin, below-knee amputation) won gold and set a Paralympic world record.

✦ Para athletics classification codes: T = track; F = field; numbers 61-64 denote prosthesis users with lower-limb impairments — T61/F61 (below-knee, no prosthesis), T62 (below-knee, prosthesis), T63 (above-knee, prosthesis), T64 (below-knee, prosthesis). Key India para-athletes at Paris 2024: Avani Lekhara (R2 golds, shooting), Praveen Kumar (T64 High Jump gold), Nishad Kumar (T47 High Jump silver), Deepthi Jeevanji (T20 400m bronze). Paralympic Committee of India oversees para sports.

[Read Source →](#)

Q99

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is registered under which legislation and has what legal status?

- A A statutory body under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
- B A private society registered under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, 1975
- C A public sector undertaking under Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
- D Registered under the Companies Act as a Section 8 company



A private society registered under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, 1975

BCCI is a private society registered under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, 1975. It is not a government body, receives no government funding, and is not subject to the RTI Act. The Supreme Court-appointed Lodha Committee (2016) mandated major governance reforms including term limits for elected officials, one-state one-vote, and separation of administrator-player roles.

✦ BCCI is affiliated to the International Cricket Council (ICC) and the Asian Cricket Council (ACC). IPL media rights for 2023-2027 were sold for Rs 48,390 crore — a record for any cricket broadcast deal globally. Unlike other national sports federations (NSFs) that receive Sports Ministry recognition and funding, BCCI operates entirely on commercial revenues; however, it remains bound by court-mandated governance norms under the R.M. Lodha Committee framework.

[Read Source →](#)

Q100
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding Kaveh Madani and the Stockholm Water Prize 2026:

1. Kaveh Madani is the Director of UNU-INWEH (UN University Institute for Water, Environment and Health), based in Hamilton, Canada.
2. The Stockholm Water Prize is awarded annually at Stockholm World Water Week by SIWI.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ B 2 only

Statement 1 is incorrect — UNU-INWEH is headquartered in Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada (Greater Toronto Area), not Hamilton. Statement 2 is correct — the Stockholm Water Prize (established 1991) is awarded annually by SIWI (Stockholm International Water Institute) at Stockholm World Water Week, typically held in August. The 2026 prize was announced on World Water Day (March 22) and will be formally presented by H.M. King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden at World Water Week in Stockholm.

✦ Kaveh Madani, an Iranian-born water governance expert, became the youngest laureate in the Stockholm Water Prize history at age 44 and the first UN official to receive it. UNU-INWEH (UN University Institute for Water, Environment and Health) is one of the institutes of the United Nations University — the academic arm of the UN. India faces extreme water stress, ranking 13th globally per the World Resources Institute Aqueduct Atlas; agriculture uses approximately 80% of India's freshwater.

[Read Source →](#)

Q101

Which country will host the 2028 World Indoor Athletics Championships, and at which venue?

A India; Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, New Delhi

B India; Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar

C Japan; National Olympic Stadium, Tokyo

D South Africa; Cape Town Stadium

✓ B India; Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar

India will host the 2028 World Indoor Athletics Championships at Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar, Odisha — India's first time hosting a global track-and-field championship. The hosting rights were awarded by the World Athletics Council at its meeting in Torun (Torun), Poland in March 2026. The event is scheduled for March 3-5, 2028, making India only the fourth Asian nation to host this championship after Japan, Qatar, and China.

✦ Bhubaneswar has established itself as India's sports capital: it hosted the FIH Hockey World Cup in 2018 and co-hosted it with Rourkela in 2023. World Athletics (formerly IAAF) is headquartered in Monaco and headed by Lord Sebastian Coe. The National Para Athletics Championship (March 2026) was also held at Kalinga Stadium. India's sports infrastructure investments — including the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad (world's largest cricket stadium) — reflect the country's ambitions to host major global events.

[Read Source →](#)

Q102
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI):

1. ZSI is headquartered in Kolkata under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
2. ZSI discovered new lichen moth species in the eastern Himalayas (*Caulocera hollowayi* in Sikkim and *Asura buxa* near Buxa Tiger Reserve).

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. ZSI is headquartered in Kolkata under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC). The two new lichen moth species were described in the journal *Zootaxa* (March 2026): *Caulocera hollowayi* was collected from Golitar, Sikkim, and *Asura buxa* from Panijhora in West Bengal, near Buxa Tiger Reserve. The discovery was hailed by Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav as strengthening documentation of India's moth diversity.

✦ Lichen moths (Arctiidae family) are bioindicators of environmental health — their caterpillars feed on lichens, which are highly sensitive to air pollution (especially sulphur dioxide). Their presence signals clean air and intact habitat. Buxa Tiger Reserve (West Bengal) is also a Project Elephant reserve located on the India-Bhutan border. ZSI was established in 1916 and conducts faunal surveys across India, publishing the annual State of India's Biodiversity reports.

[Read Source →](#)

Q103

Bhubaneswar previously hosted which major international sporting event, enhancing its sports infrastructure credentials?

- A** Men's Cricket World Cup 2023
- B** FIH Hockey World Cup in 2018 and (co-hosted) 2023
- C** FIFA U-17 World Cup 2017
- D** Commonwealth Games 2010

✓ B **FIH Hockey World Cup in 2018 and (co-hosted) 2023**

Bhubaneswar hosted the FIH Men's Hockey World Cup in 2018 at Kalinga Hockey Stadium — Belgium won that edition. In 2023, Odisha co-hosted the Hockey World Cup with Bhubaneswar and the newly-built Birsa Munda International Hockey Stadium in Rourkela; Germany won the 2023 title. This back-to-back hosting experience and world-class infrastructure supported India's successful bid for the 2028 World Indoor Athletics Championships at Kalinga Stadium.

✦ India has been strategically investing in multi-sport infrastructure to host global events. Kalinga Hockey Stadium has been certified by Guinness World Records as the world's largest fully seated hockey stadium. India's sports hosting ambitions align with the broader goal of bidding for the 2036 Olympic Games; Ahmedabad has been a leading candidate city. The Odisha government's consistent sports sponsorship (including jersey sponsorship of Team India hockey) is a flagship state-level sports policy.

[Read Source →](#)

Q104

Under the Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) for highway projects, what is the government's upfront contribution?

A 20% upfront; 80% as annuity over 20 years

B 40% upfront; 60% as annuity over 15 years

C 60% upfront; 40% as annuity over 10 years

D 50% upfront; 50% as annuity over 15 years

✓ B 40% upfront; 60% as annuity over 15 years

Under the Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM), introduced by NHAI in January 2016, the government pays 40% of the project cost upfront in equal instalments during the construction phase and the remaining 60% as annuity payments over 15 years of the Operation and Maintenance period. Traffic and revenue risk remains with the government; the private developer bears construction and completion risk only.

✦ HAM was designed to revive private interest in highway construction where traffic projections are uncertain, making BOT-Toll unviable. Key comparison: EPC — 100% government funding, private builds; BOT Toll — private bears full construction and traffic risk, earns tolls; HAM — government pays 40% upfront + 60% annuity, private bears construction risk only. HAM has become the dominant model for new NHAI project awards. The Barabanki-Bahraich NH-927 (Rs 6,969 crore) and several other corridors approved in March 2026 use this model.

[Read Source →](#)

Q105
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding BHAVYA (Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna):

1. BHAVYA was approved with an outlay of Rs 33,660 crore to develop 100 plug-and-play industrial parks.
2. It is implemented by NICDC (National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Ltd) under DPIIT.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. BHAVYA — Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (not Viksit Yojana) — was approved by the Union Cabinet with an outlay of Rs 33,660 crore to develop 100 plug-and-play industrial parks ranging from 100 to 1,000 acres. It is implemented by NICDC (National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Ltd, formerly DMICDC, renamed in 2022) under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). Parks will feature ready-built factory spaces, testing labs, warehousing, worker housing, and core infrastructure.

✦ NICDC implements all of India's industrial corridor projects: DMIC (Delhi-Mumbai), CBIC (Chennai-Bengaluru), AKIC (Amritsar-Kolkata), VCIC (Vizag-Chennai), HNIC (Hyderabad-Nagpur), and HWIC (Hyderabad-Warangal). NICDC has 51% Govt equity and 49% Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) equity. BHAVYA is expected to generate approximately 15 lakh direct jobs. Plug-and-play parks provide pre-cleared land with built-in infrastructure, reducing time-to-production for incoming industries.

[Read Source →](#)

Q106

The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 replaced which earlier rules and prohibit which activities in wetlands?

- A The 2010 Rules; prohibit only drainage and reclamation
- B The 2010 Rules; prohibit drainage, reclamation, solid waste dumping, discharge of untreated effluents, and setting up industries within wetlands
- C The 1997 Rules; prohibit only construction and waste discharge
- D The Forest Conservation Rules; prohibit commercial fishing only

✓ B

The 2010 Rules; prohibit drainage, reclamation, solid waste dumping, discharge of untreated effluents, and setting up industries within wetlands

The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules 2017 replaced the 2010 Rules, which had a centralised Central Wetlands Authority structure. The 2017 Rules decentralised governance by creating state-level Wetland Authorities. Prohibited activities include: encroachment, conversion to non-wetland use, setting up or expanding industries, manufacture/storage/disposal of hazardous substances, construction and demolition waste dumping, discharge of untreated effluents from industries and human settlements.

✦ India has 98 Ramsar sites as of early 2026 — the most in Asia and third globally. Key Ramsar additions in recent years include Pallikaranai, Ranganathittu, Koonthankulam (Tamil Nadu), Tso Kar (Ladakh), Patna Bird Sanctuary (UP), and Chhari-Dhand (Gujarat). The 2017 Rules allow state governments to expand the list of prohibited activities to suit local conditions. Wetlands provide ecosystem services: flood buffering, groundwater recharge, biodiversity habitat, and carbon sequestration.

[Read Source →](#)

Q107
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding the Ramsar Convention:

1. India joined the Ramsar Convention in 1982 with Chilika Lake and Keoladeo Ghana (Bharatpur) as first Ramsar sites.
2. Designation as a Ramsar site legally prevents all development within that wetland area.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ A 1 only

Statement 1 is correct — India became a party to the Ramsar Convention on February 1, 1982; Chilika Lake (Odisha) and Keoladeo National Park (Bharatpur, Rajasthan) were designated India's first Ramsar sites in 1981 and are commonly cited as the sites with which India joined. Statement 2 is incorrect — Ramsar designation does NOT impose a legal ban on all development; it commits parties to the principle of 'wise use' (sustainable utilisation) while allowing compatible activities. Actual legal protection depends on each country's domestic legislation.

✦ The Ramsar Convention (signed February 2, 1971 in Ramsar, Iran; entered into force 1975) is a multilateral environmental agreement on wetland conservation — World Wetlands Day is observed on February 2. The Montreux Record is a register of Ramsar sites experiencing or likely to experience adverse ecological changes; India's Loktak Lake (Manipur) and Keoladeo Ghana are on this record. India has 98 Ramsar sites as of 2026 — most in Asia. India has the most Ramsar sites in Asia and ranks third globally.

[Read Source →](#)

Q108

NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation) consists of how many satellites and what types?

- A 5 satellites; 3 GEO and 2 MEO
- B 7 satellites; 3 GEO and 4 IGSO (Inclined Geosynchronous)
- C 9 satellites; 6 GEO and 3 LEO
- D 7 satellites; 4 GEO and 3 MEO

✓ B 7 satellites; 3 GEO and 4 IGSO (Inclined Geosynchronous)

NavIC (officially IRNSS — Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System) comprises 7 operational satellites: 3 in Geostationary Orbit (GEO) at 34°E, 84°E, and 129.5°E over the Indian Ocean, and 4 in Inclined Geosynchronous Orbit (IGSO) at inclinations of 29°. The IGSO satellites trace a figure-8 pattern over India daily. This configuration ensures a minimum of 4 satellites are visible from any point within India and 1,500 km beyond its borders — the minimum required for accurate 3D positioning.

✦ NavIC is operated by ISRO and became operational in 2016. Coverage: India and a region extending approximately 1,500 km beyond its borders (regional system, unlike GPS which is global). Accuracy: approximately 5 metres for Standard Positioning Service (civilians); below 1 metre for the Restricted Service (defence/government). India mandated NavIC chipset support in mobile phones sold in India from 2023. Kargil War (1999) was the key trigger for NavIC development — the USA denied India access to precise GPS data during the conflict by activating Selective Availability.

[Read Source →](#)

Q109
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding GAGAN (GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation):

1. GAGAN is a satellite-based augmentation system developed jointly by ISRO and Airports Authority of India (AAI).
2. GAGAN augments NavIC signals for civil aviation use in India.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ A 1 only

Statement 1 is correct — GAGAN (GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation) was jointly developed by ISRO and AAI as India's Space Based Augmentation System (SBAS). Statement 2 is incorrect — GAGAN augments GPS signals (not NavIC). It was certified by DGCA in 2015 for APV-1 precision approach operations, making India the third country with this capability and the first SBAS system serving the equatorial region.

✦ GAGAN broadcasts correction signals for GPS via GSAT satellites, improving accuracy to 3 metres over Indian airspace. It complies with ICAO SARPs for Safety of Life use. Comparable systems globally: US WAAS, Europe EGNOS, Japan MSAS, Russia SDCM. NavIC is a standalone navigation system, not an augmentation system, and is not yet certified for civil aviation approach procedures.

[Read Source →](#)

Q110

Which UPSC-relevant fact about the Kargil War (1999) is most directly relevant to India's motivation for developing NavIC?

- A Pakistan used Chinese GPS substitutes to guide its troops
- B The USA denied India access to precise GPS data during the conflict
- C India's communications satellites were jammed during the conflict
- D Russia refused to supply GLONASS data to India during the conflict

✓ B The USA denied India access to precise GPS data during the conflict

During the Kargil War (1999), the USA denied India access to precise GPS data by activating Selective Availability (SA) for the conflict zone, leaving India operationally dependent on degraded civilian signals. This demonstrated that a navigation system owned by a foreign power could be denied regionally at critical times, directly triggering ISRO's mandate to develop the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS/NavIC), approved in 2006.

✦ Selective Availability (SA) was the US policy of intentionally degrading GPS civilian accuracy to ~100 metres. President Clinton permanently disabled SA on 1 May 2000, improving civilian accuracy to ~20 metres. However, the USA retains the technical ability to deny or degrade GPS regionally during military operations. This geopolitical vulnerability is why India, China, Russia, and the EU all developed independent GNSS systems (NavIC, BeiDou, GLONASS, Galileo).

[Read Source →](#)

Q111

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory opinion on Chagos Islands (2019) established what principle?

- A Bilateral dispute resolution must precede ICJ advisory opinions
- B Decolonisation of Mauritius was not lawfully completed when the UK unlawfully detached Chagos from Mauritius before independence
- C The UN Security Council has exclusive jurisdiction over territorial disputes
- D ICJ advisory opinions are legally binding on all UN member states


B

Decolonisation of Mauritius was not lawfully completed when the UK unlawfully detached Chagos from Mauritius before independence

The ICJ advisory opinion of 25 February 2019 (13-1 ruling) held that the decolonisation of Mauritius was not lawfully completed when the UK detached the Chagos Archipelago in 1965 — three years before Mauritius gained independence (1968). The UNGA subsequently passed a resolution (116 in favour, 6 against, 56 abstentions) demanding the UK withdraw its administration as rapidly as possible. Advisory opinions are not legally binding but carry significant political weight.

✦ The Chagos Archipelago includes Diego Garcia, host of a major US-UK military base strategically critical to the Indian Ocean. A 2024 UK-Mauritius agreement in principle would cede sovereignty to Mauritius while the US-UK retain the base for 99 years — but later faced domestic political complications in the UK. The ICJ has 15 judges; advisory opinions require a simple majority. India abstained from the UNGA vote.

[Read Source →](#)

Q112
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding India-ASEAN relations:

1. India and ASEAN established a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2022.
2. India's Act East Policy was launched in 2014 as an upgrade of the Look East Policy (1991).

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both are correct. India and ASEAN elevated ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership at the 19th ASEAN-India Summit in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on 12 November 2022 — marking the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-India dialogue relations. India's Act East Policy was announced by PM Modi at the East Asia Summit in November 2014, replacing the Look East Policy initiated by PM Narasimha Rao in 1991, adding a strategic and security dimension to the earlier economic focus.

✦ ASEAN (10 members: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) was founded in 1967 and is headquartered in Jakarta. India became a sectoral dialogue partner in 1992 and a Strategic Partner in 2012. India's key ASEAN connectivity initiatives: Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project, India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, and the ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement (goods, 2010). India-ASEAN trade target: USD 200 billion by 2025.

[Read Source →](#)

Q113

The Lonar Crater Lake (Maharashtra) was inscribed on which national/international conservation list in 2020?

- A UNESCO World Heritage List
- B Ramsar Wetland of International Importance
- C Biosphere Reserve under UNESCO MAB Programme
- D Tiger Reserve under Project Tiger

✓ B Ramsar Wetland of International Importance

Lonar Crater Lake, in Buldhana district, Maharashtra, was designated a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance in 2020. It is one of only four known hyper-velocity meteorite impact craters in basaltic rock in the world. Its age was earlier estimated at ~52,000 years; updated argon-argon dating now places it at approximately 576,000 years (Pleistocene Epoch).

✦ Lonar Lake is unique for being both saline and alkaline, hosting extremophile microbial communities studied by NASA for astrobiology. India had 85 Ramsar Sites as of 2024. Maharashtra's Ramsar sites include Lonar, Nandur Madhmeshwar, and Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary. The Ramsar Convention was signed on 2 February 1971 in Ramsar, Iran — World Wetlands Day is observed on 2 February every year.

[Read Source →](#)

Q114
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements regarding rivers of Meghalaya:

1. The Umiam Lake (Barapani) near Shillong is an artificial reservoir created for hydro-power generation.
2. The Dawki (Umngot) River, famous for crystal-clear water, flows along the India-Bangladesh border in Meghalaya.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both are correct. Umiam (Barapani) Lake is an artificial reservoir formed by damming the Umiam River; construction was completed in 1965 by the Assam State Electricity Board for hydroelectric power generation. The Dawki (Umngot) River in West Jaintia Hills district is renowned for its crystal-clear water; it flows along the India-Bangladesh border and drains into the Surma-Meghna river system in Bangladesh.

✦ Dawki is a key trade route between India and Bangladesh via the Dawki Land Port (Inland Water Transit and Trade Protocol). The 1932 Dawki suspension bridge crosses the Umngot River at the border. Meghalaya's major river basins: Umiam (Khasi Hills), Umngot (West Jaintia Hills), Simsang (Garo Hills), and Myntdu (East Jaintia Hills). Cherrapunji (Sohra) and Mawsynram in Meghalaya contest the title of world's wettest place.

[Read Source →](#)

Q115

Kaziranga National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and hosts what percentage of the world's one-horned rhinoceros population?

A About 40%

B About 55%

C About 70%

D About 85%

✓ C About 70%

Kaziranga National Park (Assam) hosts approximately 70% of the world's greater one-horned rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) population — 2,613 rhinos as per the 2022 census. It was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985 specifically for its outstanding value as the world's major stronghold of this species.

✦ Kaziranga, spanning the Brahmaputra floodplains in Golaghat and Nagaon districts, also has the highest density of Royal Bengal tigers of any Tiger Reserve in India. Annual Brahmaputra floods are ecologically beneficial — they flush out invasive species, replenish nutrients, and force animals to migrate to higher ground (Karbi Anglong hills), enhancing genetic diversity. Kaziranga is also an IBA (Important Bird Area).

[Read Source →](#)

Q116

Yoga 365 was launched under which Ministry, and what is its core objective as distinct from the International Day of Yoga campaign?

- A** Ministry of Health and Family Welfare; integrate yoga into clinical therapy protocols
- B** Ministry of Ayush; promote yoga as a daily 365-day practice rather than an annual event
- C** Ministry of Education; introduce yoga as a compulsory school subject
- D** Ministry of Culture; certify yoga practitioners for international instruction



Ministry of Ayush; promote yoga as a daily 365-day practice rather than an annual event

Yoga 365 is a nationwide campaign launched by the Ministry of Ayush to move beyond the single-day International Day of Yoga (21 June) and embed yoga as a daily year-round wellness practice. It includes free daily online yoga sessions, community outreach, and collaboration with corporate, educational, and neighbourhood networks. AYUSH stands for Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy.

 India proposed the International Day of Yoga at the UN General Assembly in September 2014; the UN declared 21 June as IDY in December 2014. The first IDY was celebrated globally on 21 June 2015. June 21 is the summer solstice — the longest day in the Northern Hemisphere. The Ministry of Ayush was established as a separate ministry in November 2014. NSS 79th Round data cited by Ayush showed 96% urban awareness of traditional health systems but far lower daily practice rates — the gap Yoga 365 aims to close.

[Read Source →](#)

Q117
STATEMENT-BASED

Consider the following statements about the National Health Mission (NHM):

1. NHM has two sub-missions: National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and National Urban Health Mission (NUHM).
2. ASHAs (Accredited Social Health Activists) are incentive-based community health workers functioning under NHM.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A 1 only

B 2 only

C Both 1 and 2

D Neither 1 nor 2

✓ C Both 1 and 2

Both are correct. NRHM was originally launched on 12 April 2005; in May 2013, the Union Cabinet approved the National Urban Health Mission (NUHM) as a second sub-mission under an overarching National Health Mission (NHM). ASHAs are village-level female community health activists trained and deployed under NHM on performance-linked incentives to serve as a bridge between households and the formal health system.

✦ India has over 10 lakh (1 million) ASHA workers — the world's largest community health worker programme. Key NHM outcome targets: reducing Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), and Total Fertility Rate (TFR). India's IMR fell from ~80 per 1,000 live births in 2000 to 27 in 2021. ASHAs were awarded the WHO Director-General's Global Health Leaders Award in 2022 for their role during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Read Source →](#)

Q118

Exercise Amogh Jwala, showcasing multi-domain warfare capabilities including drones and electronic warfare, was conducted by which Command of the Indian Army?

A Northern Command

B Eastern Command

C Western Command

D Southern Command

✓ D Southern Command

Exercise Amogh Jwala was a 13-day exercise (6-19 March 2026) conducted by the Indian Army's Southern Command at the Babina Field Firing Ranges, Uttar Pradesh. The exercise, executed by the White Tiger Division, validated tech-driven mechanised warfare integrating attack helicopters, fighter aircraft, drones, counter-drone systems, electronic warfare (EW), air defence, and night-fighting capabilities. Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth, GOC-in-C Southern Command, witnessed the culmination event.

✦ The Indian Army has 7 operational commands: Northern (Udhampur), Eastern (Kolkata), Southern (Pune), Western (Chandimandir), Central (Lucknow), South-Western (Jaipur), and ARTRAC — Army Training Command (Shimla). Babina Cantonment (Jhansi, UP) is home to the 1 Strike Corps, India's primary offensive mechanised formation. Multi-domain warfare (MDW) integrates land, air, cyber, space, ISR, and EW domains — a key shift in India's modernisation doctrine after the 2020-21 Ladakh standoff.

[Read Source →](#)

Q119

The Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) for India's highway projects under NHAI assigns which risk to the private developer?

- A Traffic and revenue risk only
- B Construction and completion risk only
- C Both traffic and construction risk
- D Neither traffic nor construction risk — government bears all risks

✓ B Construction and completion risk only

Under HAM, the government pays 40% of project cost as a construction support grant (in ten equal instalments linked to milestones) while the private developer finances the remaining 60% (through equity and debt). After completion, the government repays the 60% as variable annuity payments over 15 years with interest. The private developer bears construction and completion risk only — traffic and revenue risk stays with the government, as NHAI collects toll revenue directly.

✦ Comparison of highway models — EPC: government funds 100%, private builds; no traffic risk for private party. BOT Toll: private bears both construction and traffic risk, earns toll revenue for concession period. HAM (introduced by NHAI in 2016): hybrid — private bears construction risk only, government bears traffic/revenue risk. HAM is preferred where traffic projections are uncertain or insufficient to make BOT Toll viable. It has become the dominant model for NH construction in India.

[Read Source →](#)

Q120

Yashobhoomi (IICC), inaugurated in 2023 in Dwarka, New Delhi, is described as India's flagship in which sector?

- A Defence technology exhibitions and DRDO showcases
- B MICE infrastructure — Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions
- C Affordable housing and smart city development
- D Renewable energy policy conferences

✓ B MICE infrastructure — Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions

Yashobhoomi (India International Convention and Expo Centre, IICC) in Sector 25, Dwarka, New Delhi, is India's largest convention centre — and the largest in Asia by area. Phase 1 was inaugurated by PM Modi on 17 September 2023 at a cost of Rs 5,400 crore. It is India's flagship MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions) infrastructure, developed under DPIIT. The Bharat Electricity Summit 2026 was held there.

✦ MICE tourism is a high-value segment of the service economy, generating business travel, hotel, and ancillary spending. Yashobhoomi is connected to the Airport Express (Orange) Line of Delhi Metro at Yashobhoomi Dwarka Sector-25 station. Total project cost upon completion of Phase 2 is projected at Rs 25,700 crore. It competes with the revamped Bharat Mandapam (ITPO, Pragati Maidan) as India's premier exhibition and convention destination, positioning India as a global MICE hub.

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